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Editorial: Fatherhood as Cosmic Combat

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Cosmic combat occurs every Friday morning at a coffee shop a few blocks from my home. If you happen to be ordering your mocha latte during this episode of intergalactic warfare, you might not even notice. Neither arms nor armor can be seen at the epicenter of this celestial struggle. No lightsabers are visible, and no voices are raised. At the nexus of the battle, there is only a man of not-quite-average height in one chair, a bubbly and beautiful middle-school girl in another, and a Bible and a couple of ceramic mugs on the table between them.

Do not let such mundane appearances misguide you: This is cosmic combat. When I as a father sit at that table with my daughter, building on a week of family devotions and mother-daughter discussions, I am at war. This is not war *with* my daughter; it is war *for* my child's soul.

Even as I train Hannah to take up

her cross and root her identity in Jesus Christ, the surrounding culture calls her to celebrate immaturity, to smirk at sin, and to center her passions on pleasures that will slip away. This is war because the same serpentine dragon in that celestial conflict that John glimpsed on Patmos who longed to consume the fruit of Mary's womb also wants to devour my children (Rev 12:1-9). His weapons in this conflict are neither the priests of Molech nor the soldiers of Herod (Jer 32:35-36; Matt 2:16). The Enemy's weapons in my child's life are slickly-promoted celebrities and commercials that subtly but surely corrode her soul. What we wrestle against in this battle is not "flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12).

Over the past few years, I have spent thousands of hours carefully researching how Christian parents are shaping their children's souls. Throughout this process, I've repeatedly bumped up against a painful but unavoidable truth: The overwhelming majority of Christian parents are not actively engaged in any sort of battle for their children's souls. When it comes to the process of disciplining their progeny, most Christian

fathers have abandoned the field completely.

In the simplest possible terms, if you as a parent are personally engaged in a process to transform the contours of your child's soul, you are a minority. If you are a father and you are actively and intentionally discipling your child, you stand in an even smaller minority.

However, I envision a time when Christian fathers consistently engage in planned discipleship processes with their children. I eagerly anticipate an era when fathers regularly lead family worship times and spontaneous spiritual conversations. I do not describe my own practices because I do them so perfectly—I don't. I share what I do simply so that other fathers can see this as something that God can enable them to do as well. These practices are not consistently happening right now—I know that. But I believe that they can happen, and I firmly hope that they will.

Part of what must precede such a revival is a God-centered, Scripture-rooted, gospel-driven understanding of what it means to be a father. And that's what we hope to shape in you throughout this issue of *The Journal of Family Ministry*.

Fatherhood is the focus of this issue of *JFM*—but such a focus requires far more than a discussion that begins and ends with the dynamics of human fatherhood. Anything that is good in the habits of human fathers is good only because it reflects the goodness of our heavenly Father (see Eph 3:14-19).

To explore fatherhood as believers in Jesus Christ requires us to begin by looking at the One who provides the only perfect paradigm for fathers. For this reason, the first two feature articles in this issue wrestle deeply with what it means—both within the Trinity and for us as brothers and sisters of Jesus—to call God “Father.” Ken Canfield from Pepperdine University explores the impact of fatherlessness, while biblical counselor Heath Lambert considers how the church must respond when a husband or father abuses his authority. The research briefs in this issue focus on what parents are—and aren't—doing to disciple their children. The *JFM* forum and book reviews consider the relationship between family ministry, children's ministry, and youth ministry. The last couple of articles in this issue are from pastors, Pete Schemm and David Prince. Each one explores at a

very practical level how earthly fathers can reflect more completely the fatherhood of God.

Once again, we encourage you to subscribe to *JFM* using the card inserted in this issue. The editorial staff also welcomes submissions of articles and book reviews; editorial guidelines are included in this issue. Themes for forthcoming issues appear inside the back cover.

In any endeavor of this magnitude, there are times when statements are printed that could communicate in ways that were not intended. In the Fall/Winter 2010 issue, some portions of the article “When Does Life End?” call for clarification. Specifically, the article identified the use of a feeding tube as potentially constituting aggressive therapy and classified a broad range of medical responses in the category of “treatment.” This may have suggested that no moral obligation exists to provide nutrition and hydration to persons with conditions deemed by a physician to be incurable or irreversible. Understood in this way, the article would have left the impression that it is acceptable to allow an individual in a minimally-conscious or vegetative state to die of starvation or dehydration. That is not the position of this journal, of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, or even of the individual who wrote the article. The editors regret the lack of clarity and offer our sincerest apologies. For a clear expression of our position on these issues, readers are encouraged to consult the three-part series “Terri Schiavo: Long-Term Questions” on the website AlbertMohler.com.

Still learning to live as God's child,
Timothy Paul Jones, Ph.D.

ENDNOTES

¹Portions of this editorial have been excerpted from *The Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011). Used by permission.



The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: The Trinity as Theological Foundation for Family Ministry

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The title of this article may raise some immediate questions in the minds of readers: Is there really a connection between the doctrine of the Trinity and the design and practice of family ministry?¹ To many persons, the Trinity seems to be nearly impossible to understand and quite removed from real life issues. How could the Trinity truly be relevant to *anything* that takes place in our daily lives, including the issues related to church and family ministry?

It may come as something of a surprise to some readers that the doctrine of the Trinity is really and truly one of the most practical doctrines in the whole of what we believe in the Christian faith. Why? Because the Trinity helps us to understand how the Persons of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—relate to one another and so work in this world, as well as how the triune God

has designed many relationships among us humans to take place. Wherever you have human relationships—which is about everywhere you look!—you have the opportunity to ask, “How do relationships among the trinitarian Persons help us understand how our relationships are to be lived out in ways that better reflect something of the triune God and better express God’s designed purposes for us, his human creatures made in his image?”

In order to see how the doctrine of the Trinity is foundational for family ministry, we will consider three areas. First, a brief summary of the doctrine of the Trinity will clarify what it is that Christians ought to believe. Second, we will consider some broad areas of trinitarian relationships in order to see how the doctrine of Trinity provides helpful example and instruction for how we should live in relationship with others. Finally, we will explore how truths about the Trinity, rightly understood, provide foundational underpinnings for family-equipping ministries in the church.²

WHAT DO CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE TRINITY?

The Christian faith affirms that there is one and only

one God. Moses instructed the children of Israel, “To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, he is God; there is no other besides him” (Deut 4:35). God himself boldly declares through the prophet Isaiah, “Besides me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other” (Isa 45:5-6). James in the New Testament agrees. “You believe that God is one,” he writes. “You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder” (James 2:19).

Christian faith also affirms that this one God eternally exists and is fully expressed in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead is equally God, each is eternally God, and each is fully God—not three gods but three Persons of the one eternal Godhead. Each Person is equal in essence to the other divine Persons. Each possesses fully and simultaneously the identically same, eternal divine nature. Yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of that one and undivided divine nature.

The equality of essence among the members of the Trinity is greater than the equality that exists among human beings or among any other finite reality. For example, my wife Jodi and I are equally human, in that each of us possesses a human nature. Her nature is of the same kind as my nature—that is to say, *human nature*. Our equality is real and actual “equality of kind.” Each of us has the same kind of nature as the other.

Equality of Identity in the Trinity

The equality of the three divine Persons is even more firmly grounded than my equality with Jodi. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each possesses not merely the same kind of nature—that is to say, *divine nature*. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each also possesses fully and eternally the *identically same nature*. Their equality, then, is not merely an equality of kind but what might be called an “equality of identity.”

There is no stronger grounding possible for the full equality of Persons of the Godhead than this: the Son possesses eternally and fully the identically same nature as the nature that is possessed eternally and fully by the Father and by the Spirit; hence, their equality is

not merely an equality of kind but is in fact an equality of identity. And so we affirm today what the church has explicitly affirmed as orthodox since the days of the Councils of Nicaea in A.D. 325 and Constantinople in A.D. 381: The oneness of God—and thus the full essential equality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is constituted precisely in a oneness of divine nature possessed fully, simultaneously, and eternally by each of the divine Persons. There is one and only one God, precisely because there is one and only one eternal and infinite divine nature which is the common possession and full possession of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. God is *one* in essence and *three* in Persons.

Roles and Relationships within the Trinity

Now, notice this carefully: Since by nature or essence the Father, Son, and Spirit are identically the same, what distinguishes the Father from the Son and each of them from the Spirit *cannot* be their one and undivided divine essence. At the level of the divine essence, each is quite literally indistinguishable as each possesses eternally and fully the identically same divine nature.

What, then, distinguishes the Father from the Son and each of them from the Spirit? What distinguishes the Persons of the Trinity are (1) the particular *roles* that each has within the Trinity and in the work each carries out in the world, and, (2) the respective *relationships* that each has with the other divine Persons and within the creation that the triune God has made. Since the Father, Son, and Spirit must be distinct from each other as Persons, while they are in another sense identical to one another in their common essence, their distinction must be in these areas of roles and relationships, since they cannot be distinct in regard to their divine essence. How, then, are the roles and relationships of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, distinct from one another? And how do these distinctions help us in understanding better the ways in which the Trinity can provide a foundation for family-based ministry?

WHAT ARE THE DISTINCT ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS OF THE TRINITARIAN PERSONS?

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully God. They are each equally God. They each fully possess one undivided divine nature. Yet each Person of the Godhead is different in role and relationship with respect to the others. To distinguish the roles and relationships that exist in and among the triune Persons, we might say this: The *Father* is supreme in authority among the Persons of the Godhead, and he is responsible for devising the grand purposes and plans that take place through all of creation and redemption (see, for example, Eph 1:3, 9-11). The *Son* is under the Father's authority and seeks always to do the Father's will. Although the Son is fully God, he nonetheless takes his lead from the Father and seeks to glorify the Father in all that he does (see, for example, John 8:28-29, 42). The *Spirit* is under both the Father and the Son. As the Son sought to glorify the Father in all he did, the Spirit seeks to glorify the Son, to the ultimate praise of the Father (see, for example, John 16:14; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11).

To understand how these roles are expressed, consider some of the works that God accomplishes. Often we think of these as the works of "God," and rightly they are. Yet these are the works of the *triune God*, with the Father, Son, and Spirit each contributing to the whole of the work and together accomplishing all that God brings to pass.

Trinitarian Roles in God's Work of Redemption

Consider God's work of redemption: The Father purposed and planned that our redemption as sinners would be accomplished. The Father planned that it would take place through the work of his Son, such that his Son would have the highest place of exaltation in the end (Eph 1:9-10). The Father is the one who chose us *in Jesus* before the world had yet been created (Eph 1:3). The Father chose *the Son* to be the One who would come as our Savior and die for our sins (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:20). When the Son came, he made it clear over and over again that he came down from heaven to do his Father's will (John 6:38), even declaring in Gethsemane that his

upcoming death on the cross was specifically the will of his Father (Matt 26:39).

The Son, for his part, came in full obedience to the Father. His coming was not his own doing but occurred because of the Father's initiative (John 8:42). Of course the Son is in full agreement with this, his Father's will—but that it was the will of the Father is recognized and acknowledged by the Son over and over again. The Son had the distinct role of becoming incarnate in order to take on our sin and provide his life as a substitute sacrifice for us (Phil 2:6-8; 1 Pet 2:24). While it is true that the Son bore our sin on the cross, it is also true that the Father is the One who put our sin upon his own Son, in order to save us through the death that he would bring about through his Son (Isa 53:10; 2 Cor 5:21).

The Spirit, for his part, came as the prophets foretold to anoint and empower the Son for the work that he was sent by the Father to accomplish (Isa 11:2; 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-21). The Spirit so worked in the Son so that the Messiah was able to accomplish all of the good works and perform the miracles he did, as the Father directed him (John 5:19) and the Spirit empowered him (Acts 10:38). When the atoning work of the Son was complete, the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11) and empowered the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21). As Peter makes clear in his sermon that day, the Spirit's coming occurred because he was ultimately sent by the Father, though he was sent most directly upon these believers by the Son (John 15:26; Acts 2:33). The Spirit's coming upon believers was to empower the proclamation of the Gospel (Acts 1:6-8), to regenerate unbelievers, to baptize them into the body of Christ (Titus 3:5; 1 Cor 12:13), and to work in all who trust Jesus to make them fully like their Savior (2 Cor 3:18).

Many more examples may be found throughout Scripture, but God's work in redemption is sufficient to illustrate this point: *God works as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, with each Person accomplishing the specific work that each one is responsible to do.* Within the carrying out of these roles, there seems to be a clear relationship in which the Father is supreme in authority, the Son submits fully to the will of the Father, and the Spirit seeks to carry forward the work of the Son to the

ultimate praise of the Father (Phil 2:11).³ The distinctions in their work, then, must be recognized if we are to understand rightly the outworking of God's purposes and plans.

Unity of Purpose and Harmony of Mission within the Trinity

One further truth is essential for us to understand this pattern: There is full harmony in the work of the triune God, with no jealousy or bitterness, only love and harmony. The Father never considers himself better than the Son or Spirit—even though he has authority over both and stands as the divine designer and grand architect of all that takes place! In fact, rather than putting himself forward, the Father designs all things so that his Son, not himself, is given the primary spotlight in the history of creation and redemption.

The Son never begrudges the fact that he is the Son under the authority of the Father. Just the opposite, the Son loves nothing more than to do the will of the Father (see, for example, John 4:34). While always submitting completely and fully to the Father, the Son does so with joy and delight (Heb 12:2). The Spirit, while being third in the Trinity and always under the ultimate authority of Father and Son, considers it his delight to honor and to glorify the Son (John 16:14; 1 Cor 12:3).

Clearly, when we behold the Trinity for what it is, we should marvel! We should be amazed at the unity and harmony of this common work within authority and relationships that have marked their roles and responsibilities throughout all eternity. Unity of purpose and harmony of mission, yet with differentiation in lines of authority and submission within the Godhead! This truly is a marvel to consider.

TRINITARIAN FOUNDATIONS FOR FAMILY MINISTRY

How does this doctrine of the Trinity constitute the foundation for family ministry in the church? In short, the Trinity provides us with a model in which we understand the members of a family as fully equal in their value and dignity as human beings made in God's image. Yet each member has distinct roles and relationships within the family; these roles and relationships are

worked out within an authority-submission structure that God designed as purposefully reflective of God himself.⁴

In other words, the Trinity presents us with the truth that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are fully equal in their essence while also presenting the truth that the authority-submission structure of the Trinity is inviolable with the Father as supreme, the Son under the Father, and the Spirit under the Father and the Son. Each divine Person is fully equal as God. Yet the Father and Son and Spirit each carries out a distinct role and does so within an eternal relational structure of authority and submission.

This trinitarian perspective helps us to understand the family. All the members of a family are equal in who they are as human beings. Each one is equal in value and dignity and worth; in this, they mirror the equality that we see among the three Persons of the Trinity. Because of this equality of dignity and worth, each member of the family ought to be accorded respect and be treated as someone created in the image of God.

Also mirrored in the family are trinitarian distinctives that relate to roles and relationships. The husband and father has, under God, the highest place of authority in the household. His wife submits to him, and his children obey both him and his wife. The wife is under the authority of her husband, but is over the children in the household, partnering with their father to ensure that they learn godliness and obedience. The children are under the authority of both of their parents, understanding that they are to learn from their father and mother what is most important in life, all the while obeying their parents with joy and gladness. Both the equality and the distinctiveness that we see in the Trinity should be reflected in household relationships. The church's ministries must understand both this *equality* and this *differentiation* and seek to reinforce this in what the church encourages and teaches.

HOW CAN CHRISTIAN FAMILIES REFLECT TRINITARIAN ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS?

Let's carefully consider some aspects of family relationships where the equality and differentiation of the

members of a family can and should be seen as reflective of the equality and differentiation within the Trinity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HUSBANDS AND FATHERS

Married men and fathers must realize and embrace the truth that God has invested in them a special responsibility for the spiritual leadership that they should develop in relation both to their wives and children. In a real and vitally important sense, husbands and fathers bear responsibility for the Christian nurture of their households—a responsibility that differs from their wife and from other members of the household. The husband of the household is granted a privilege and a duty, before the Lord, to direct the discipleship and development that takes place with their wives and with their children.

This is abundantly clear as it relates both to the spiritual well-being of a husband's wife, and of a father's children. No clearer or more forceful passage could be mentioned here than Paul's words to the church in Ephesus (Eph 5:25—6:4). A husband is called to regard his relationship with his wife in a manner that is likened to Christ's relationship with the church. Jesus loved the church dearly and deeply and gave himself for her "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:26-27). Then Paul added these words, "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies" (Eph 5:28). It simply is impossible to have given a more forceful or more compelling directive to husbands for how they must consider their responsibility as spiritual leaders and lovers of their wives. One phrase particularly captures the end goal that a husband must keep in his mind as the final purpose for Christ's love toward the church: "that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:27). The headship of the husband must take to heart the sober and joyous responsibility to work, to serve, to love, to pray, and long for the continual spiritual growth of his wife.

According to Ephesians 6:1-2, children are to obey their parents and to honor their fathers and mothers,

recognizing that this is the first commandment with a divine promise (Eph 6:1-2). Notice that "parents"—that is fathers *and* mothers—are in view in these first two verses. One might expect that, in the next verse, Paul would have continued to urge *both* parents—but he doesn't! Instead, Paul aimed his next direction specifically toward fathers of households: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The point is clear: *Fathers* in particular bear special responsibility for the faith-training of their children. As heads of their houses, some fathers might abuse their authority in ways that would provoke their children to anger—but that is not God's way. Instead, fathers are to create an atmosphere where they lead their children in the discipline of obedience to Jesus and in learning the wisdom of Jesus. Fathers have the God-given mandate and privilege of blessing their children by cultivating a household environment where children grow to respect, love, and follow Jesus, in obedience to their fathers and in honor of both their fathers and mothers.

Both headship relationships—the husband guiding his wife and the father directing his children—can be easily perverted into one of two sinful tendencies. One sinful response is for men to abuse their headship by being heavy-handed, mean-spirited, harsh, or demanding in unloving ways. God has *not* given husbands this authority for the purpose of gratifying their own pleasures or for exploiting opportunities for their own comfort! Godly authority is exercised out of benevolence, not out of selfishness. The husband's headship must be invested in constant healing, restoration, growth, and joy in family relationships.

The second sinful perversion of headship is far more sinister yet far less obvious. In this perversion, husbands and fathers abdicate their God-given responsibility. Such men are not necessarily mean-spirited; they are simply not there. When we abdicate our responsibilities as husbands and fathers, we become apathetic, distant, often absent, uninterested and uninvolved in the spiritual direction of our wives and children. The harm that we inflict on our families through apathy and uninvolved involvement can wound just as deeply as the harm that is inflicted through heavy-handed selfishness. The souls of

our wives wilt before our eyes, and our children grow more distant and more attached to peers than parents as they seek the love and leadership that they lack from their fathers.

God has assigned husbands and fathers a sacred stewardship that involves responsibility for the spiritual growth and well-being of wives and children. The roles and relationships within the Trinity call us to realize that God intends households to reflect a reality that is true in the Godhead itself. And since this is true, church ministries must be designed in ways that acknowledge and equip husbands and fathers to carry out these responsibilities. In too many cases, well-intended church ministries have usurped the father's role in the discipleship of his children. How much better to train men so that they can lead their families to grow in love for God and in knowledge of God's Word! Family ministry must give focused attention to the training of men. In a very real sense, as the husbands and fathers go, so goes the family and, as households in a congregation go, so goes the congregation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR WIVES AND MOTHERS

Here is a simple yet revolutionary and counter-cultural observation: Every New Testament passage offering instruction directly to wives includes one common element. In every instance, wives are commanded to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18; Titus 2:3-5; and 1 Pet 3:1-6). Today, it is rare, even at Christian weddings, for the bride's vows to include a promise to "submit to" her husband.

Our culture despises submission as much as it despises authority, but God calls us to a different mind and heart on this matter. And here, wives can benefit enormously from the doctrine of the Trinity in realizing that submission is itself reflective of the very submission eternally given by the Son to his Father, and by the Spirit to the Father and the Son. In this sense, God calls wives to be what he *is*, just as he has also called husbands to be what he also *is*. In obeying the biblical command to submit to their husbands, it is not enough simply to grit your teeth and submit, resenting this calling. Why is such begrudging submission insufficient? It is because

such an attitude fails to understand the nature of submission as a reflection of the Son's submission to the Father, and the Spirit's submission to the Father and the Son. In the Trinity, just as the Father exercises his authority with impeccable wisdom and goodness, so the Son and Spirit give joyous and glad-hearted submission to the Father, always longing to do just what is asked or commanded of them.

In addition, just as the husband's thoughtful and loving headship should reflect Christ's relationship to the church (Eph 5:25-27, 31-32), so the wife's glad-hearted and consistent submission should reflect the church's privilege of absolute submission before the lordship of the Messiah (Eph 5:24, 31-32). Therefore, the type of submission a wife is called to render to her husband is joyful and glad-hearted. A wife, then, should seek before God to render submission that seeks to help, longs to serve, and looks for opportunities to assist in any way that will be an encouragement and help to God's calling upon her husband's life. Just as God calls all of us to submit to authority with whole heart and willing spirit, so this special calling and privilege is given to wives as a reflection of the triune relations within the Godhead.

But let's be clear about this also: Submission can be very difficult. Unlike the church's relationship to Jesus, in which the church can be confident that anything Jesus commands will be wise and good, husbands cannot be counted on to lead with flawless wisdom and goodness. In fact, sometimes husbands are pitifully unlike Christ, and submission can be very difficult. Wives are not commanded to "retrain" their husbands, though they might endeavor to do so through fervent and godly example. Wives nonetheless are commanded to submit to these imperfect husbands.

The most striking passage here is Peter's instruction to wives. Peter specifically addresses wives whose husbands are unbelieving. Presumably, these husbands may be the most difficult for a Christian wife to live with and under. An unbelieving husband might have far less in common with his wife's spiritual interests. Despite this, Peter instructs these wives to be subject to their own husbands, so that they may be guided toward the Messiah through the godly conduct of their wives (1 Pet 3:1-2).

I find it astonishing that it is in this text, of all New Testament passages that teach on husband and wife relations, that the strongest language is used to describe a wife's submission! Peter appealed to Sarah as an example and said that she "obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Pet 3:6a), indicating that they would be Sarah's "children" if they fearlessly followed this example (1 Pet 3:6b).⁵

Make your relationship to your husband an issue of spiritual accountability before the Lord, and live before your husband in a way that honors Christ. God will honor you as you seek to honor him and his Word. He will bless you enormously as you seek to obey him by being faithful to fulfilling what he has called you to do.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN

Children are given the role both of obeying their parents and of honoring their father and mother. Every parent understands that you can receive obedience—at least *outward* obedience—without receiving honor. Children must view honoring their parents as essential to their role in the household. To honor parents is to respect them as persons and to listen attentively to their instruction as persons older and wiser. Parents bear primary responsibility for how children are raised, but children bear responsibility for responding to parents in appropriate ways. Even now, learn to view your parents as God's gifts to you and to consider their words of advice, warning, encouragement, and instruction.

The equality that exists in the Trinity is reflected in the equality by which God has made every human being. Since each member of your family is made in the image of God, each should be treated in ways that are fitting to who they are. Insults, unhealthy sarcasm, lying, and hurting one another have no place in a family, because they dishonor both God and those made in his image. Parents and church ministries together must cultivate an atmosphere where children learn to speak to one another and act toward each other in ways that find approval in God's sight.

THE TRINITY AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Family-equipping ministry seeks to partner with husbands, wives, parents, and children to assist them

in learning what it means to be a family as God intends them to be. Men embracing biblical manhood, women embracing biblical womanhood, and children embracing their biblical roles under their dads and moms—this is what the family-equipping church seeks to foster and to advance. In each of these roles, the model of the Trinity provides invaluable guidance, for we see in the Trinity that the Ones who submit are fully equal to the One who holds ultimate authority in their relationships. Equality and distinction, oneness and difference, unity and harmony, mark the Trinity. These same realities, in finite measure, ought to mark the family relationships we enjoy, as persons created in the very image of the triune God.

ENDNOTES

¹This article has been excerpted from the forthcoming book *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011). Used by permission.

²For further study of the doctrine of the Trinity, both as a central doctrine of the Christian faith and for the relevance and application it has for the Christian life, I recommend the following: Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009); Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004); Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005); James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1998).

³For further explication and clarification of submission structures within the Trinity, see Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005) 46-66, 87-102.

⁴For interaction with alternative positions on this matter, see, e.g., S. Kovach and P. Schemm, "A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (1990): 461-76, and, B. Phillips, "Method Mistake:

An Analysis of the Charge of Arianism in Complementarian Discussions of the Trinity,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Spring 2008): 42-47.

⁵A question may be raised here regarding how women should respond if their husbands engage in abusive behaviors. While this specific issue is beyond the scope of this article, the editors recommend reference to Ware, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 146-148; David Powelson, et al., “Pastoral Responses to Domestic Violence,” in *Pastoral Leadership for Manhood and Womanhood*, eds. Dennis Rainey and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003) 265-277; and, the Statement on Abuse from the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (<http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/Statement-on-Abuse>). See also the article by Heath Lambert later in this issue.



Remembering the Father in Fatherhood: Biblical Foundations and Practical Implications of the Doctrine of the Fatherhood of God

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We are privileged to have direct commands from God concerning fatherhood in Scripture. We are com-

manded to train and instruct our children in the ways of God without making them bitter (Eph 6:4). We are commanded (negatively) against provoking our children to the point of discouragement. Scripture teaches us to saturate our homes with the Word of God (Deut 6:7-8) and make sure proper discipline is meted out in order to lead our children away from dangerous folly and into the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:7-11). Beyond these instructions, we have the Proverbs, compiled by a father whose heart burned to impart wisdom from above into the heart of his son (Prov 1:4-9).

We have a great deal of instruction from the Lord concerning fatherhood, but, frankly, we need more than instruction. After all, even instruction manuals are typically illustrated. While we are indeed thankful for any directions we receive concerning child rearing, we could use more help. We need a model of

fatherhood. We need to see fatherhood in action. Reading instructions is always made easier by seeing a living example. How much better would it be to have a living example of fatherhood? Thanks be to God, we have such an example. We have the perfect example to learn from now that we have become children of God. Now that the Spirit has helped us, we can cry out, "Abba, Father," to the only perfect father knowable on the earth. We call the living God our Father.

The thought of calling God "Father" is almost unthinkable to many people, including Muslims. Born into the upper class of the Muslim society in Pakistan, Bilquis Sheikh later converted to Christ. In her testimony concerning her conversion, Bilquis Sheikh remembers how shocking it was when a certain Dr. Santiago first suggested that she address God as Father: "Talk to him as if he were my Father! The thought shook my soul in the peculiar way truth has of being at once startling and comforting."¹ You can read the remainder of Bilquis's testimony in the book *I Dared to Call him Father*. My aim in this article is to shake our souls in the peculiar way truth has of being startling and comforting at the same time. Specifically, we who wish to call ourselves father have direct access to the perfect

Father through Jesus Christ, his Son. If we know Christ, we know the Father—a truth both startling and comforting to us who hope to be (in an earthen vessel way) good fathers.

We have many fine examples of earthly fathers. Jonathan Edwards comes immediately to mind. So impressive was the outcome of Edwards's parenting that liberal scholars in the early twentieth century used his family to argue for eugenics!² The Edwards family produced more than six dozen elected officials, including governors, senators, and Vice President Aaron Burr (who was Jonathan Edwards' grandson by his daughter Esther). George Marsden writes, "the Edwards family produced scores of clergymen, thirteen presidents of higher learning, sixty-five professors, and many other persons of notable achievements."³ A letter Edwards wrote to his daughter Esther is sufficient evidence of the wisdom and godly love he instilled in his family as their father. Esther had moved away from the family and had become ill. Suffering both from homesickness and bodily sickness, she wrote to her father for counsel. He replied, "Labor while you live, to serve God and do what good you can, and endeavor to improve every dispensation to God's glory and your own spiritual good, and be content to do and bear all that God calls you to in this wilderness, and never expect to find this world anything better than a wilderness."⁴ The profundity of Edwards in his ability to offer both a soft warning and a strong consolation to his daughter during her suffering is manifestly available to us who have access to him through his writings. We can learn from the earthly example of Jonathan Edwards.

A less theological example is the fatherhood example of Dick Hoyt. Dick Hoyt serves as a tremendous example of what it means to be a father devoted to his son. Dick was told that his son—a spastic quadriplegic—needed to be institutionalized because he would never be able to function properly on his own. Yet, Dick kept his son at home, working with his communication ability and keeping him in school. Dick's son was able to let him know that he wanted to run in a 5k fundraiser for a high school classmate who had been injured. Dick actually ran the 5k pushing his son in a wheelchair in front of him all the way. At the conclusion of the race, Dick's son told him that while they were running,

he didn't feel handicapped. That was all the incentive Dick Hoyt needed. He has now completed 68 marathons, 238 triathlons, and 6 ironman triathlons while pushing, pulling, and riding his son through every step, every swimming stroke, and every pedal.⁵ Dick Hoyt is undeniably devoted to his son in a way that few of us earthly fathers know. We can learn from this earthly example of fatherhood.

Yet, for all the devotion that Dick Hoyt has shown to his son, Rick, his devotion does not go far enough. It is not complete. The devotion that our heavenly Father has shown to his Son, Jesus Christ, is complete. It takes into account all glory and every joy in heaven and on earth. Our heavenly Father has, in fact, now given his Son the name that is above every name so that all will bow down in worship to him (Phil 2:9-11). Just as there is incompleteness in the example of Dick Hoyt, there is incompleteness in Jonathan Edwards, too. For all the wisdom that Jonathan Edwards was able to impart to his own children, his wisdom was, at best, borrowed from above, from the Father. As great as the greatest examples of fatherhood are for us on the earth, they pale in comparison to the singularly perfect example on display in the nature of our heavenly Father toward us who have been given the right to become children of God. Nothing should be clearer to the Christian father than the fact that he has a heavenly Father who is perfect. The Father Himself should instinctively be the preeminent source of our attempts to embrace fatherhood.

Yet, there has been a reticence in evangelicalism to exalt the fatherhood of God. In his book *The Forgotten Father*,⁶ Thomas Smail argues that Christians have abandoned the doctrine of the fatherhood of God as a consequence of liberal abuses of the term, on the one hand, and a charismatic emphasis of the Holy Spirit, on the other. John Armstrong agrees, saying that "over the last half century the church has experienced a wide-scale remembrance of the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. In the process we have believed and preached a gospel in which the Father has been all but forgotten."⁷ Smail's work is an attempt to correct the excesses and return a rightful Christian emphasis upon the fatherhood of God. Influenced by Smail's work, Armstrong argues that it is time for Christians to carry the doctrine

further into the practice of the church to bring about revival.⁸

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE FATHERHOOD

If there is to be a revival of emphasis on the doctrine of the fatherhood of God, such a revival must be grounded in and formed by Scripture. Only the Word of God lasts forever without fail. So, for our understanding of fatherhood, we turn to Scripture to explore the instruction on this practical doctrine. We need not look far to find allusions to fatherhood. God the Father speaks univocally with the Son and the Spirit in creating humankind, “Let us make man in our image according to our likeness” (Gen 1:26, NASB).⁹ This “fatherhood” of all humankind becomes paradigmatic of all fatherhood, as is clear in the institution of family. In the marriage of man and woman, there is both a separation from fatherhood and an expectation of fatherhood. The man leaves his father and mother so that he and his wife might become father and mother. In this manner, fatherhood is never discarded; it is always honored. No one is alive without it. The first man, Adam, becomes a father, begetting a son in his own likeness (Gen 5:3), and originates the rich human tradition of establishing genealogies. It is not in this genealogical sense of fatherhood that we are able to speak of God as the Father of all. He is instead Creator of all human beings, and, as such, he offers care and provision for all (Job 38; Isa 43:6-7). God, as Creator, is, in a generic sense, Father of all. Yet, this general sense of fatherhood is not what the Bible is pointing to primarily when it speaks of God as Father. Speaking of God as a universal Father in the liberal sense of the twentieth century is an extrapolation of social theory placed back over biblical interpretation in the same manner a jockey places blinders over the eyes of his horse—ensuring that the animal will see only a particular course straight ahead.

When the Bible speaks of the fatherhood of God, it speaks much more intimately than any generic, Creator references can imply. In Isaiah 43:6-7, for instance, God does speak generically, of his “sons” whom he created for his glory. In the clear context of that passage, however, God is addressing his children, whom he calls by the

individual name Jacob, and he promises to deliver them from their enemies by giving the enemies to Jacob. In this way—in the way of blessing his chosen ones with salvation and deliverance—God will be glorified in these sons who come from afar, whom he created for his glory. The Old Testament makes plain that the Father has a unique, chosen love for his son, Israel. Nowhere is this clearer than in the biblical account of the Exodus.

The Exodus account begins with the Father commanding Moses to confront Pharaoh, telling the Egyptian ruler, “Let My people go” (Exod 8:20). There is no hint here of confusing the “My people” in the story. Neither Moses nor Pharaoh believes that God means everyone under Egyptian rule. It is clear to all parties that by “My people” God means Israel. Israel—the offspring of father Abraham whom God chose for covenant relationship—are the people whom God calls “My people” (cf. Rom 4:17). God the Father, in love, turns the fatherless Abraham into the father of many nations. The “children” of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are children of the promise which God made to Abraham. They are children of the covenant. As such, they are uniquely the children of God. He is uniquely Father to them, as is made plain throughout the Old Testament (Deut 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; 2 Sam 7:14; Hos 11:1).

What is stated in these Old Testament passages is on plain display in the Exodus itself. In the dramatic clash of power between God and Pharaoh, it becomes clear that the Father is demanding his right to nurture his own son. Pharaoh’s folly consists of denying the Father his son. In fact, Pharaoh’s consistent hardness toward God’s repeated pleas ends with one of the two power figures losing his firstborn son. The heavenly Father does not lose his son. Pharaoh is the foolish, hard-hearted loser at the end of the Exodus encounter. Though Pharaoh had suffered through frogs and blood and hail, he had not yet reached the depths of his rebellious despair. The final verdict made clear that this encounter was ultimately about a Father and his son: “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn” (Exod 4:22-23, NASB).

Already, our minds are racing to apply this doctrine

of fatherhood to our daily lives, as we recognize one aspect of the father's task to confront every earthly power which holds our sons captive. Even as the Father fought a victorious encounter with the world's most powerful man (and his so-called gods), so, too, we will be called to fight against those who would hold our children captive to the god of this world. It is a good application. Yet, we must be patient because more is left to unfold from the New Testament—much more. Though the Old Testament has indeed revealed uniqueness to the concept of fatherhood, we do not yet see a fully individualized access to the Father by the sons of Israel. Instead, we find a predominantly cultic (or communal) concept in operation. Israel as a group was considered to be the children of God. It is not made abundantly clear that individuals understood the full implications of divine paternity.

In his impressive, six-volume work, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Carl F. H. Henry asserts that familial intimacy exists in passages such as Psalm 23, Psalm 27, Psalm 30, and throughout the book of Job.¹⁰ Yet, Henry explains these passages as having derived from the logical working out of the covenant rather than from any conscious or formulated theology of fatherhood. In other words, Israelites seeking to be faithful to the covenant were seeking God the Father as children should. They did trust his care, provision, and promises. But they did not have clear revelation concerning the Father. They had Moses and Abraham, but not yet Jesus. Consequently, they did not have the individual sense of fatherhood which we see revealed in the New Testament. As Henry concludes, "Divine fatherhood in the individual sense has no significance let alone sure place in the Old Testament religion."¹¹ Before we make our application, then, we must wait to see the full development of the doctrine of the fatherhood of God as it is disclosed in the New Testament.

No one doubts but that the New Testament books—particularly the gospels—explode with copious commentary concerning the fatherhood of God. The fourth gospel alone has 107 occurrences of the term Father relating to God.¹² But the New Testament doctrine, as we have seen, is not a novel development; it is, rather, refined gold from the furnace of redemption,

having gone through creation, curse, covenant, Exodus, conquest, kingdom, and exile. The fatherhood of God for his son never disappeared along the way. It simply waited for the arrival of God's only begotten Son for its definitive declaration. In former days, God spoke to his people through prophets in many different ways, but now, he has spoken finally and decisively in his Son (Heb 1:3). The Apostle John agrees with the writer of Hebrews, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him" (John 1:18). Jesus Himself made this plain when he said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Jesus reveals the Father. This fact is laden with implications for every aspect of our lives, but it is particularly germane to us as fathers who are looking to the New Testament for help. We come to a place of quiet sobriety in which we realize that Jesus Christ opens for us a reality heretofore unknown. In times past, men knew of gods. The Babylonians had their creation myth complete with Marduk defeating Tiamat. The ancient Greeks had Plato's Demiurge. Eastern religions had an uncountable number in the pantheon of gods involved in creation. Seemingly, every culture and people has explained creation in some way. So, it is no startling concept to hear of the Christian view of creation or of the Creator God. What is startling, however, is the accompanying truth that startled Bilquis Sheikh—namely, we know the Creator God as our heavenly Father. Christ has made him known. Islam—with its unyielding monotheism—knows nothing of God as Father. Even Judaism has not fully understood the implications latent in the covenantal language. It took the Incarnation of Christ to display—reveal, manifest, explain, exegete—the comforting truth of the "Our Father." We have a heavenly Father. This reality, at first, is startling.

For all the good we can say about a father, we should begin with the fearful acknowledgement that fathers can be a little bit scary. Typically (and by design) fathers are the more authoritative and demanding members of the family. Sons and daughters rightfully fear their fathers to a certain extent. The deep reverence children are supposed to possess toward their fathers is found in Jesus' basic prayer instructions to his followers. He tells

them to begin their addresses to their heavenly Father with “Let your name be holy” (Matt 6:9). We are commanded to sanctify or consecrate or “holi-fy” (if there were such a word) the name of our heavenly Father. Whatever we go on to say about the familiarity we have with our Father, we must begin such statements of familiarity with the startling reality that he alone is set apart in holiness. The Father must be allowed to stand alone in holiness. Such holiness in the Lord’s Prayer is an indication that our approach to the Father is more about honoring and revering him than it is asking for goods and services to be rendered by him. As Leon Morris puts it, “This prayer is not so much a petition that God will do some great act that will show everyone who and what he is, as a prayer that he will bring people to a proper attitude toward him. It expresses an aspiration that he who is holy will be seen to be holy and treated through his creation as holy.”¹³ Neither Morris nor we need to revert back to God merely as creator in saying such things about his name being hallowed. Rather, the point becomes for us the reality that we actually are able to approach the God behind the name that is set apart as supreme Creator and Ruler of the universe. It is the Creator God (and the Almighty Ruler God) whom we approach as Father. So, we must remember reverence when we cry, “Abba, Father.”

We should be clear about what we are saying with respect to fatherhood. We are not attempting here to begin with our earthly concept of fathers and transferring that idea to our heavenly Father. We are, rather, understanding that Christ reveals the perfect Father and, in so doing, instructs those who would approach this Father to do so with due reverence (rather than with a laundry list of wants, demands, or tests). This eternal reality—the reverence with which the divine Son approaches the heavenly Father—displays the norm by which we understand the reverence all fathers are supposed to receive. Certainly, no earthly father warrants the consecration due to God alone, but, still, God the Father is behind every other legitimate father on earth. Therefore, fatherhood itself is exalted, as it reflects the ultimate reality of the approachable God. Fatherhood is a holy endeavor.

What we see in the New Testament is that Jesus

reveals the Father. We simply cannot begin with our earthly concepts of fatherhood if we hope to get to the right revelation of our perfect, heavenly Father. Though earthly fatherhood reflects the glory of the heavenly Father, it will never display him fully or rightly. Indeed, as strange as this may sound, we cannot even begin with the Father himself for our understanding of God the Father, for “no one has seen him.” Instead, we must look to Jesus Christ if we are to see the Father. In this sense, understanding fatherhood is impossible apart from devotion to Christ. No place exists in speaking of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man generically. The Father has children who are able through the firstborn Son to approach him. This is what Christ himself said: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me” (John 14:6). Fatherhood—rightly understood—begins with Christ. Preeminently, God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, then, reveals his Father to us. As Henry says, “The exclusive sonship that Jesus claims for himself is what enables all penitent sinners to experience moral and spiritual reconciliation with God. Jesus the ‘beloved Son’ in whom the Father delights . . . introduces alienated sinners to the Father’s love which they may share through his mediatorial work.”¹⁴ We come to the Father through the Son.

As we noted before, Jesus—the one who gives access to the Father—also gives instruction concerning our approaching the Father. He says we must begin with reverence and sanctity. Jesus, who knows better than anyone the depth of the separation between God and sinners, has made a way through his own death and resurrection for us to have access to the Father, but such access is neither casual nor broad; it exists because of Christ. Jesus has mediated the means by which we approach our perfect Father in Heaven, and Jesus says, “Approach with care because he is Holy.” With holiness as our groundwork for approaching the Father through Christ, we begin to see the glorious reality of the Father unfold, so that throughout his life, Jesus would commit himself to the will of the Father. As a child, Jesus separated from his earthly father and mother for a time because he had to be about his father’s business (Luke 2:49).¹⁵ During his public ministry, Jesus was devoted

to the will and purposes of his heavenly Father (John 2:4; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 11:27-28). And, at the end of his earthly life, Jesus famously prayed to the Father, “Not my will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). As John makes plain, Jesus was always intent on accomplishing the Father’s will (John 5:19). From his early journey to Jerusalem with his parents to his last journey to Jerusalem with his disciples, Jesus devoted Himself to do his Father’s will.

In so completely accomplishing the work which the Father gave him to do, Jesus proved what he taught his followers, that the Father’s name is hallowed. So, Jesus’ entire life on earth never outgrew the opening of the Lord’s Prayer. And Jesus, because he so faithfully consecrated the name of his Father, ended up putting the Father on full display throughout his life. Pleasing the Father was the preeminent delight and purpose of the Son because the Father alone was set apart in his perfections. What the Father commanded was the great good of accomplishing his mission. Obedience was not simply good. It was Jesus’ privilege, purpose, and pleasure. The dynamic of the Father’s will and the Son’s obedient delight is evident in the prayer of John 17. The prayer in John 17 brings into particularly sharp focus the perfect union of the Father and the Son (vv. 5-6) and spells out for the followers of Christ what it means to know the Father (vv. 1-3). John 17 is an intimate engagement between the only perfect Son and the only perfect Father ever known.

Because of the profundity of this prayerful encounter between God the Father and God the Son, scholars have had some difficulty deciding upon exactly how they ought to refer to John 17. D. A. Carson notes that since the 16th Century the passage has frequently been called Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer.”¹⁶ The prayer does offer unique intercession (v.9) for Christ’s followers. However, as Carson points out, the prayer might be better explained in other ways such as consecration. Says Carson, “The most widely adopted [view] is as follows: Jesus prays for Himself (vv. 1-5), for his disciples (vv. 6-19), and for the church (vv. 20-26).”¹⁷ The point is not to belabor classification of the prayer, but, rather, to say that this prayer at the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry was itself quite consistent with the prayer he taught his

followers from the beginning. Indeed, Jesus confessed that he has “hallowed” the Father’s name by accomplishing all of the work which the Father gave him (v. 4). And, again consistent with the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus prayed throughout John 17 (at the end of his life) nothing other than “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.” Those exact words are not always used, but the ideas contained in those words are abundantly clear. Everything about John 17 is for the Father to glorify the Son because the Son has glorified the Father. And the glorification largely consisted of the work the Son accomplished by setting apart a people who would receive the revelation of the Father. In other words, the work of the Son was to accomplish the will of the Father. The will of the Father was to reveal Himself to a group of people who would come to know him via the redemption accomplished by the Son. Glorification would ensue in the unity and harmony of worshiping wills as the children are drawn forever to the Father’s eternal home.

Therefore—and this is extremely important in understanding the fatherhood of God—Jesus prayed uniquely for the very people to whom he revealed the Father. “I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom you have given me; for they are yours” (John 17:9). Clearly, fatherhood is about unique revelation in relationship. In heaven, just as we find on earth, the term father makes reference to familial authority over particular children. Most of the people who were alive when Jesus walked visibly on the earth never came to know the Father. They were also excluded from this prayer (John 17:9, 14). Jesus prayed for his disciples and revealed to them particularly God the Father. Certainly, Christ did what he did publicly so that all men are without excuse for not following him. But the mission of Christ was a redemption mission to secure God’s people for his glory. The will of God is not open-ended. It is purposeful and directed, just as the determination we see when earthly fathers work to provide for their children. In Christ, it is accomplished. The children of God have an inheritance in the Father’s house forever on account of the Son.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIVINE FATHERHOOD

Looking to Jesus for our knowledge of the Father (and hence our most basic understanding of fatherhood), we find three unmistakable essentials of fatherhood. First, we understand that fatherhood is the source of identity. Second, fatherhood expects unity. Finally, fatherhood begets harmony. So, identity, unity, and harmony are primary elements on display in the father-son relationship of God. These three elements are displayed in the prayer of John 17, as Jesus acknowledges that his position as son has been given to him by his father (vv. 1-2). The unity between the Father and the Son is found in Jesus' statement that he accomplished the work which the Father gave him to do (v. 4). And so, Jesus could then pray for the full harmonious effects of his sonship to be displayed as the Father glorifies himself and his Son (v. 5). Throughout the prayer, identity, unity, and harmony are on display. These three elements, then, might serve as our own fundamental framework for defining fatherhood. Perhaps more light on these three features of fatherhood will serve to help us apply this doctrine in our own families.

Unity

First, the Son's identity is derived from the identity of the Father. In one sense, the concept of identity is the most obvious of all. Even in earthly terms, the father gives his name to his son, and the son continues to bear that name and even multiply that name through his own sons. Likewise, Jesus is given the name that is above every name (Phil 2:9). He is the only begotten of the Father. Jesus bears the name faithfully. It is the Father's name which is hallowed, according to the Son. The Father is set apart in holiness. The Son makes plain that his task is to obey and faithfully represent his Father. This is, in fact, Jesus' identity as much as it is his task. This reality of his identity led Christ to a confrontation with religious leaders in John 8. The Jewish leaders first asserted that Abraham was their father (8:39). Jesus doubted that possibility on the basis that they were not obeying Abraham, and they desired to kill Jesus. The Jewish leaders then sought the higher ground by claiming that their father was actually God himself. Again,

Jesus displayed the dubious nature of their claim on the basis that they were rejecting the Father's Son (8:42). Jesus made explicit in this verse what was sometimes less clear in the parables, namely, that "If God were your father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on my own initiative, but he sent me." Jesus confirmed that he honored his Father and that the Jews were dishonoring the Father because they were dishonoring the Father's only begotten Son (Jn 8:49). These Jewish leaders retorted that they were serving their father, Abraham. Jesus, again, corrected them, explaining to them that they did not bear the image of God the Father: "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father" (John 8:44).

Identity, it seems, requires that the offspring bear the name and imprint of the father. Bearing the name obviously involves more than just writing "Smith" on application blanks which ask for a name. Identity, in the sense in which we are speaking about fatherhood, requires an intentional name bearing which requires the offspring to display the character of the father. Thus, the offspring can be identified by his or her actions. When a group of leaders exhibit a willingness to lie and to kill, Jesus is able to point out to them that their father is the devil, a liar and murderer from the beginning. The presence of an apple on the ground is a good indication that an apple tree is near. Likewise, the presence of deceit and murder reflects the presence of the devil, not God. Thus, reality demands that the son (or child) identify the father by his actions and desires. Jesus, of course, did this perfectly. We, of course, do not (so, James 3:8-12). Yet, we are not by our imperfections excused from the burden of reality. The Father expects the Son to identify him through his actions and desires on the earth. The perfect Son complies.

Our own identities as fathers must be exhibitions of the will and desires of the heavenly Father himself. Nothing is more important for an earthly father than that he be transformed by the renewing of his mind into the image of Christ, who himself is the image of God. The reason this transformation is so crucial is two-fold. First, this is our identity as Christians. We have received Christ and, therefore, have become children of God our-

selves. If we hope to be good fathers, we must first be faithful children. Second, this is the only honest way to live before our children. If we are children of God, then acting in any manner short of exhibiting our Father's will and desires is hypocrisy. The only way to be a Christian father is to display a great devotion to the will of our heavenly father. If we are not devoted to the Father, we will be hypocrites before our own children. As fathers, we must first realize we are children of God. That is our identity. Fathers must delight themselves in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Unity and Harmony

From a very early age, we begin to ask our little ones, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" How many times has a child answered, "I want to be an obedient child who accomplishes my father's will"? Probably never. The question is innocent enough as a reflection of our desires to consider the future well-being of the child. The question is good in that it forces the child to consider his or her own future. Undoubtedly, the question is reaffirmed daily by schools and counselors and relatives who assure our little ones that they can become anything they want to be—especially in America. The question may actually be evidence of our own imbibing the existential air of our surroundings, believing that the existing soul itself has the power to become its own preferred destiny. The question may affirm a course of self-exaltation which does not end with, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." The question may reflect a hidden, un-Christian expectation that our children should leave our homes with the heart set on "My will be done." We must instead teach our children first and foremost to unite their wills to the will of their fathers. How might this be done?

I know a wise young father who is seeking to train his three year-old to obey his will. I think he is modeling a biblical approach when he says to his son, "Isaiah, you may not play with that toy right now. Now is the time for you to eat your dinner." When the three year-old protests, demanding to know why he cannot have his own way in this matter (and this three year-old is particularly adept at raising objections), his father replies, "Because I have authority in my house and over you, my

son." I think this is the correct response. It is more than a simple, "because I said so," although even that might be the right response at times. Anyone who has heard the incessant, whining drones of a misbehaving three year-old will agree there are times when explanations should cease so that order might prevail. But in the instance of Isaiah and his dad, we find a model which we can follow. Isaiah's dad has taught him three very important realities which will serve him well for the rest of his life.

First, Isaiah (even at the age of three) understands that all authority belongs to God. His dad has made him memorize Matthew 28:18, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." So, when little Isaiah is told—on the basis of his father's derived authority—that he can or cannot do something, he is also taught that his little will must yield to that of his father. His father is teaching Isaiah to unite his will to that of the father who is above him. Second, Isaiah knows that his own father has a will that must be respected and that his earthly father is following the order prescribed by the heavenly Father. The heavenly Father has given all authority into the hands of Jesus. Jesus has all authority on the earth, and he affirms fatherly authority in the home; he expects fathers to do the will of the heavenly Father (Luke 11:28; John 15:7-11; Eph 6:4). Isaiah's dad has taught him this from Matthew 28, and he has taught Isaiah that there is a higher authority than the authority of an earthly father. In this way, Isaiah is learning both from instruction and from example that our wills must be yielded to the divine will of our heavenly Father. And, third, Isaiah is already learning that in the Father's will, he has limited authority now, but he is growing toward having his own home, his own family, and his own authority someday. Isaiah has already said to his dad, "When I get big, I will have kids, and God will give me authority, too, right Dad?" Absolutely right, Isaiah. Isaiah is learning to unite his will to the will of his earthly father. His earthly father is both teaching him and modeling for him the way a son unites his will to the father. Isaiah is growing up with both an identity and a unity rooted in biblical fatherhood. As fathers, we affirm the identity of our sons by helping them see that they should unite their wills to our wills. Together, our wills become one with the will of our Father who is

in heaven. Together, we honor his name. Together, we unite under the banner, “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” And so, whatever vocation is chosen by our children, it is chosen because we (parents and children) have discerned that this vocation is God’s calling. Obeying this calling is a form of uniting wills (those of the child, the father, and the heavenly Father). Such a unity of wills is our identity as children of God.

This unity of wills works itself out in the harmony modeled by Jesus in John 17. The third fundamental feature of fatherhood is harmony. At the conclusion of his prayerful intercourse with the Father, Jesus prays that all believers will be united in the harmony of the heavenly unity found in the Trinity. The end result of this harmony is effective witness: “I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent me, and loved them, even as you have loved me” (John 17:23). In other words, fatherhood’s fruit is revelatory harmony. Our homes ought to reflect the harmony of the Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in will and purpose. Our homes ought to reflect that unity. It is the father’s responsibility to ensure that his home reveals the harmony of God himself. The father does this, as we have seen, by staying true to his identity as a child of God and by promoting through his teaching and his behavior the unity that exists within the Godhead. To put it a different way, the unity of the Godhead should be upheld in the harmony of the home. The father is responsible for making that happen. And how does the father make sure this harmony defines his home? He does this in two ways. First, he must live faithfully to his own identity as a child of God, uniting his will to that of the Father through Jesus Christ. Second, he must actively demand—even enact—a unity of wills in the home so harmony will result.

This demand for a unity of the wills is a clarion call for fathers to take seriously the task of discipline. Discipline, as the three year-old Isaiah has taught us, extends from the heavenly Father to earthly fathers and from earthly fathers to their sons and daughters. The father of the home must insist that all persons in the home follow his will for the family. He demands such unity not because he has a hidden hint of Mussolini tucked away in his psyche; rather, he demands this unity because

he loves his family, and he knows the greatest good for himself and for each person in his family is to obey the will of God. He understands the harmony (and consequent witness) which comes from wills united to the will of God. In short, he himself understands the love of discipline.

Hebrews 12 offers the child of God a promise that is, to use Bilquis Sheikh’s terms, both startling and comforting. Granted, one does not typically read this promise in any popular Bible promise books. But the promise is clear: “Those whom the Lord loves he disciplines” (Heb 12:5). Discipline is an expression of focused and particular divine love; it is reserved exclusively for the children of God: “He scourges every son whom he receives” (Heb 12:6). If one is loved by God, he will be disciplined by God. The nexus of discipline and love is inexorable in a fallen world. The reason this connection must exist between discipline and love is that the present course of this world is darkness and destruction. The rebellion of the natural man is so complete that he cannot know the way of God (1 Cor 2:14). Consequently, a radical reorientation must occur. The child of God must be transferred out of his natural domain and into the righteousness of the kingdom of God (Col 1:13-14). Our place in the kingdom as the children of God is not easily known. Like children, we must humble ourselves before our heavenly Father and learn from him what it means to be his children. He graciously guides us (by his discipline) away from the dangers and darkness of this present world and into the reality of what it means to be a child of the Living God. This is our identity in Christ: Children of God. And what child goes without discipline? Certainly not the children of God. God deals with them as sons, and sons are always disciplined by their fathers (Heb 12:7-10). Discipline does not have a negative connotation from God’s perspective toward men. It is positive.

Discipline is not negative, but it does, apparently, hurt. Hence, the child of God must be commanded not to faint under the stroke of discipline (Heb 12:5); rather, the child must endure the scourging. The language here is that of harsh correction such as one would find in spankings or some form of corporal punishment. But the method is not nearly as important as the impact

of the discipline. Such discipline is reserved to safeguard harmony, direct the will to unity, in order to affirm and establish identity. God disciplines *his* children just as fathers discipline *their* children. When a self-willed child goes against the good will of the father, discipline must follow. So much needs to be said here, but cannot be addressed in this article. Suffice it to say here that corrective discipline (as opposed to instructive discipline) is reserved for use when a child goes against the will of the father. Defiant behavior or rebellious actions are what we are speaking of here—not accidentally spilling milk or breaking a jar. Of course, such defiance can often be masked with a smile or even in the cloak of obedience, as when the son in one of Jesus’ parables assured his father that he would do all that the father said and then went away without ever lifting a finger to do the father’s will (Matt 21:30). Defiance takes many forms. The loving father will address all forms of defiance with indignant and unflinching love so the child will know his will is not in unity with the will of his father. The issue is not so much about right versus wrong behavior. The issue is that the father is not well-pleased, and the son must readjust his will to the will of the father. There is a breach of relationship, a broken harmony, and the break is a direct result of a defiant will seeking its own harmful way against the good will of the father. The father must act swiftly and sharply and lovingly before the defiant will leads the child further down the road toward destruction. So, the father disciplines the child whom he loves, just as our heavenly Father disciplines us whom he loves in Christ Jesus.

So much more could be said concerning discipline and a father’s love, but here we conclude by simply restating what we have come to see of our heavenly Father and his great love. The Father establishes the identity of his children. So, we fathers must understand that we give our children more than a name. We give them an identity. They alone of all the children on the earth are *our* children. Hence, we expect them to act and think accordingly. The will of the father, which is a good will anchored in the will of our heavenly Father, is paramount in the home and should be the will to which the child unites. Finally, the uniting of the wills of fathers and their children in the home makes for a harmony

that shines forth in a strong witness to the goodness of our heavenly Father whom Christ has made known. Christ makes him known to us. We make him known to the world through the harmony that flows from our unity of wills as children of God.

At the end of our child-rearing, if we have done our jobs well, we will be intimately closer to our own children as a result of the harmony that comes from wills united to the Father through Christ, his Son. Such a finish is what we desire. Setting our earthly children on the eternal course of the children of God is the highest hope of our parenting endeavor, isn’t it? Our wills are united to the will of the Father, and that is all we want from our children so that we may be able to end our time with them on earth anticipating our time with them in heaven. Listen to the way Edwards said it in his letter to Esther:

“You are like to spend the rest of your life (if you should get over this illness) at a great distance from your parents, but care not much for that. If you lived near us, yet our breath and yours would soon go forth, and we should return to our dust, whither we are all hastening. ‘Tis of infinitely more importance to have the presence of an heavenly Father, and to make progress towards an heavenly home. Let us all take care that we may meet there at last.”¹⁸

ENDNOTES

¹Bilquis Sheikh and Richard H. Schneider, *I Dared to Call him Father: The True Story of a Woman’s Encounter with God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 1978), 13th Edition, July 2000, 49.

²Albert E. Winship, *Jukes-Edwards: A Study in Education and Heredity* (Harrisburg, PA: R. L. Myers, 1900).

³George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 500–501.

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⁵Dick Hoyt was recognized by the 109th Congress in a special statement from the floor calling him “The World’s Strongest Dad,” by U.S. Representative John J. Duncan, Jr. (R-TN) on June 23, 2005. Richard Neal (D-MA) presented another resolution honoring Dick

Hoyt and his son, Rick, on the floor of the House of Representatives on May 18, 2006.

⁶Thomas A. Smail, *The Forgotten Father* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980).

⁷John H. Armstrong, "Reformation and the Forgotten Father," *Reformation and Revival* 7:2 (Spring 1998) 8.

⁸*Ibid.*, 8-12.

⁹All Scripture verses are quoted from the New American Standard Bible Updated edition.

¹⁰Carl F. H. Henry, *God Who Stands and Stays, Part Two*, in *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Volume 6 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 309.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Cameron, W. J., "Father, God as," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter Elwell, editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 408.

¹³Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 145.

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¹⁵I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter [Eng.: Paternoster Press, 1978), 129, points out that "about my father's business" is a legitimate translation, though Marshall himself prefers viewing the original as a reference to the temple.

¹⁶D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 552.

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The Modern Fatherhood Movement and Ministry to Fathers in the Faith Community

DR. KEN CANFIELD

Beginning in the mid-1960s, practices and perspectives on fathering garnered new attention. In practice, it was a major development when fathers were invited to be active participants in the birth room. Related to per-

spectives, researchers demonstrated that children reared in a home with a father present faced fewer psychological and social challenges compared to children who were “fatherless.” Such findings helped to shape the rationale and basis of the modern fatherhood movement. Soon health care professionals, social-scientific researchers, and community organizers tuned into the need for responsible fathering and did so with earnestness.

In the 1940s and 1950s, fathers who went to hospitals to share in their child’s birth typically ended up smoking cigars in the waiting room and then being summoned to the glass-

windowed viewing room to see their offspring. Lamaze childbirth classes helped to change the culture and increased father involvement.¹ In addition, leaders in

the social-scientific field noted the positive benefits that would be realized in facilitating father/child attachment in the birth process.² Practitioners described the power of the “magical moment” of childbirth, paving the way to celebrate fathers as enthusiastic participants in their young children’s lives.³

On the negative side, fatherlessness became a contentious and racially-focused issue. The Moynihan report was the first to stress that male absence in homes within the African-American community would be devastating.⁴ Today, it’s strikingly clear that fatherlessness and its negative outcomes impact all children, irrespective of ethnicity. The current and conservative cost of fatherlessness is estimated at one hundred billion dollars annually.⁵ Though a significant sum, money cannot account for the staggering emotional and moral costs, as well as “loss of potential,” that plague a child disconnected from his or her dad.

Currently in America, at least twenty-five million children under the age of 18 don’t live with their natural father.⁶ Add the number of children who live with their fathers but who aren’t connected emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually and you have the dramatic majority of all children.⁷



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Currently, our federal deficit mirrors a “fathering deficit”—or is it vice versa? Though the United States of America is trillions of dollars in debt, how much more are we in arrears in a loss of potential good because a generation of fathers has failed to invest attention, energy, and resources to help their children or their children’s children succeed?

The costs and consequences of fatherlessness have been described in great detail in precedent literature; the benefits and assets of “fatherfulness” have been less so. The absence of a father leaves a child at risk. Yet the presence of a dad, particularly one who is responsible and humble, can breathe hope and life into a child. On this, the research and opinion leaders are unified: fathers matter,⁸ and they play an essential role in healthy child development.

Infants who have time alone with their dad show richer social and exploratory behavior than do children not exposed to such experiences. They smile more frequently in general, and they more frequently engage in playful behaviors with their dad.⁹ Children who sense closeness to their fathers are twice as likely to enter college or find stable employment after high school; they are seventy-five percent *less* likely to have a child in their teenaged years, eighty percent less likely to spend time in jail, and half as likely to experience depression.¹⁰ A four-decade study reports that when dads encourage their daughters to excel and achieve and are emotionally close to their sons, their daughters are more successful in school and careers, and their sons achieve greater economic status.¹¹ In summary it is the best of times for fathers and their children if they are involved and connected, but it is the worst of times for children who lack a dad. It is clear that fatherless children not only struggle because of intermittent or no contact with their dad, but they also wrestle with emotional and psychological loss.

In 1990, a men’s magazine ran an editorial in which Asa Baber expressed his belief that healthy father involvement had been ignored and minimized for too long. He predicted that judges, legislators and mothers would wake up and conclude they had missed much by not having dads involved with their children, and he predicted this awakening would come to fruition in

the 1990s.

Personally, I began working in the fatherhood field in the mid-1980s. It was relatively uncharted territory. In the early days, the budding emphasis on fatherhood was considered a compatriot to a “men’s movement.” The secular men’s movement encompassed many diverse streams. A group of pro-feminist, pro-fatherhood men, with Warren Ferrell as their champion, pressed for male equality and for reconciliation between the sexes. Another stream, headed by Jeffery Leving, was a group of “father’s rights” activists who argued in legal contexts that a father’s access to his children was unfairly limited after divorce. Leving handled a myriad of cases, challenging the notion that custodial rights should favor mothers. Then, there were the “drum-beaters” or the mythopoeic prophets represented by Robert Bly and Sam Keen. These thoughtful and melancholy writers were deeply troubled by how father loss devastated men well into their adulthood. They argued for change and small group remediation to help men become whole. Lastly, and perhaps most influential, were organizations which promoted responsible fatherhood from a Christian perspective. These groups and their leaders dominated the field and continue to do so even today. They included such groups as Dad the Family Shepherd, Focus on the Family, Dads Only, The National Center for Fathering, Great Dads, and Promise Keepers.

THE FATHERHOOD MOVEMENT IN THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Fathering ministry was initiated in a significant way by Dave Simons through his “Dad the Family Shepherd Conferences.” A former N.F.L. player whose life was dramatically changed by his conversion to Christ, Dave concentrated his energies on training fathers. Dave personally trained 50,000 men in two-day conferences before being killed in a car accident at the age of fifty-one. What Simons started was soon to be followed by a host of other groups such as the National Center for Fathering; N.C.F. trained another 50,000 or more men in two-day training sessions as well as developing training sessions for leaders and a plethora of programs for inner-city fathers. Other smaller organizations—Great Dads, Dads Only, and Better Dads—provided similar

training and generally worked in parallel and cooperative ways.

Focus on the Family and Promise Keepers used their widespread influence to promote responsible fatherhood, highlighting programs and speakers that helped participants to become better fathers. This segment of the market was eager and hungry, evidenced through surveys in which men reported “fatherhood” as an area of highest importance in their lives.¹²

Even with growing numbers there was a general recognition by leaders that the intersection of fatherhood and faith had been largely unexplored. David Blankenhorn, a sympathetic and thoughtful voice, wrote:

Several years ago, I wrote a book about fatherlessness....I said almost nothing about the relationship between human fatherhood and the fatherhood of God. I only asked: Do children need fathers? But what if the deeper question is: Do fathers need God? More precisely, does knowledge and love of God help a man to be a good father and a good husband? If yes, how? The more I learn about contemporary fatherlessness in modern societies, the more I am persuaded that these are not only the hardest questions, they may also be the most important.¹³

The Promise Keepers phenomena capitalized on men’s growing interest in spiritually-focused fathering. Beginning in early 1990s and extending through 2005, over 6.5 million men attended Promise Keepers rallies in stadiums across the United States. (This does not include their 1997 Stand in the Gap event in Washington, D.C., where more than one million men gathered at the Mall.) At each venue, resources were provided to encourage and to help fathers prioritize and optimize their relationships with their children. The spiritual teaching about fatherhood was emerging and one reporter summed it up in the *Portland Oregonian* like this: “A shadow has fallen over the secular man’s movement, and it looks a lot like a cross.” The article went on to detail the dramatic numbers of men impacted by the Promise Keepers movement from a spiritual perspective.

I vividly remember seeing the impact of Promise Keepers as I stood in the Washington Mall in October, 1997, observing hundreds of thousands of men being challenged to be responsible fathers and father figures. At one point, a speaker said, “Get out your wallet, and if you have a picture of your family take it out and look at it.” I observed one man, who looked to be in his mid-thirties, take out a picture. When the speaker challenged him to pray for the welfare of his wife and children, he squeezed his eyes tightly, praying with all his heart, and then burst into tears. It was a dramatic moment that reinforced the spiritual dimension of his fathering.

Promise Keepers proved to be more representative of American men than one may think. The men who thronged to these events were not just the righteous but the broken. In many cases, these men were seeking healing from father loss—first for themselves in relation to their own fathers, and then in the form of direction in their current fathering. Surveys of Promise-Keeper participants ($n=4452$), collected from 1995 through 2004 revealed that about half of Promise Keepers had college degrees.¹⁴ The median age was thirty-seven. Three-fourths of attendees were currently married, although about a quarter had been divorced. The median length of current marriage was eleven years. Sixty percent of Promise Keepers had wives with vocations outside the home, of which forty-three percent worked part-time. Almost thirty percent of those attending reported they were converted to Christ after age twenty-five. Another twenty-seven percent of the men considered themselves workaholics. A majority responded to the statement, “I feel like my job consumes me” with “mostly true” or “somewhat true.”

A majority of Promise Keepers said they had good relationships with their own fathers; fifty-eight percent agreed with the statement, “I want to be like my own dad.” Still, even those men showed considerable ambivalence as well as a longing for a warm, emotionally-engaged model of fathering. Fewer than one-third, for example, agreed that the following statement was mostly or somewhat true: “It was easy to get close to my father.” Faced with the statement, “My father regularly shared his affection with me,” fifty-seven percent disagreed. When asked, “Did you feel that your father was largely

absent when you were growing up?” fifty-three percent of men agreed. Twenty-eight percent of Promise Keepers were products of broken homes, experiencing parental divorce at about eleven years of age. About a third of all Promise Keepers reported drug or alcohol abuse in their family of origin and about the same percentage said they experienced emotional abuse. Eleven percent reported being physically abused, and six percent said they were sexually molested. Although Promise Keepers attendees were disproportionately white in comparison with the general population, nearly all these findings were consistent with mainstream culture.

The Promise Keepers movement may have flourished not so much because they were a movement of the righteous seeking perfection, but because they were largely broken men looking for healing for themselves and for their practices of fathering. And they sought it through a relationship with another Father, a heavenly one.

Like most American cultural movements, the spiritual awakening of fathers needed a rallying cry. One text for that cry was found in Old Testament prophetic literature: “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day the Lord comes. *He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers*; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse” (Malachi 4:5-6, NIV, emphasis added).

SCRIPTURE AS SOURCE CODE FOR THE CHURCH’S FATHERING MINISTRY

Long before the modern fatherhood movement, the church had a long and storied history with respect to the role of fathers. Fatherhood—both spiritual and natural—was viewed as an essential building block for churches and households.

The passage in Malachi 4:5-6 may have provided a clarion call for the faithful fathers throughout church history, yet it was rarely explained when invoked. Set in an almost apocalyptic context, the passage highlights three significant words (heart, father, and son). Interestingly, this is the only passage in the Hebrew Scriptures where these three words appear together. Elijah is then introduced as the one who will come again and turn the hearts of one generation to the next. If this does not

occur, the land will be cursed. Elijah would be depicted later as one who would restore the generations through repentance and reconciliation, and ultimately as the restorer of “all things” (Matt 17:11). “The meaning of this is not that [Elijah] will settle disputes in families, or restore peace between parents and children; for the leading sin of the nation at that time was not family quarrels, but estrangement from God.”¹⁵

This prophetic call to fatherhood was and continues to be used extensively in the fatherhood movement. Yet there is much more in the biblical source code to provide a framework for the church’s ministry with fathers. In the Scriptures, the words “father,” “fathered,” “fatherless” and their derivatives appear more than 1,190 times. The majority of these references are used to trace lineage—“Perez the father of Hezron,” and so on—but a significant number flesh out the roles, responsibilities and functions of a father.

The metaphor *God as Father*—first of his people Israel and ultimately of the Son Jesus—sets the stage. The notion of God’s fatherhood first appears in Deuteronomy 32:6, 18, 19-20; these texts describe God’s relationship with Israel. God claims Israel as his son and thereby gives favored status. When this son abandons or fails to follow the precepts of the Father, discipline follows.

In three particular Old Testament passages, God’s fathering and human fathering are placed parallel to each other. The first instance is Deuteronomy 1:31. God describes how a son is carried by his father as similar to the way God carried Israel through the desert. He also carried them out of Egypt on eagles’ wings (Ex 19:4). He carries them like a shepherd carries his sheep to higher ground (Ps 28:9). He lifted them and carried them in times where they were distressed (Isa 63:9). These vivid images offer a clear picture of what God as a father does, and what fathers who follow him will do.

A second passage that highlights parallel imagery is found in Psalm 103, a hymn of compassionate love. In this setting the father’s example is foundational for understanding the Lord’s actions. “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.” The essence of compassion is described in Malachi 3:17: “I will spare them, just as

in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.” This pattern of sparing and compassion conveys a sense of godly pity. In Joel 2:18, after the Lord severely disciplined Israel by sending an army of locusts, he pities them by sending food and supplies. Such tender mercy is also mirrored in the laments of Jeremiah (Lam 3:32) and resurfaces as Israel is called to become humble, asking God to act anew on his father-like compassion for them (Zech 1:12). The restoration of father-like care is also seen in the return from exile as Hosea gives witness to this compassion (Hos 2:23). Again, if God as Father is full of compassion, his earthly counterparts should be as well.

One last text in which divine fatherhood and human fatherhood are parallel comes in Proverbs 3:12. In this setting it begins with “the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.” There are two facets in this simile: discipline and delight. *Discipline* is reproof or correction (see Job 5:17). The sense of rebuke and correction implies exposure to one’s sin with a call to repentance. The concept of discipline carries over into the New Testament where fathers are reminded that discipline is an essential tool in fathering (Heb 12:5-6). *Delight* is used of human beings in Malachi 1:8. The root frequently describes God’s pleasure with his servants, particular in reference with the Messiah (Isa 42:1). Thus God disciplines and delights in his Son, in the same manner a natural father would discipline and delight in his child.

In the domestic code passages in the New Testament (Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:18-21), a total of sixteen words and ten words, respectively, are addressed to fathers. In both cases, fathers are implored not to irritate, exasperate, embitter or provoke their children. Even though different words are used, their meanings are fundamentally similar. The likely response to a provoking or exasperating father is clear: children give up. They become discouraged and harbor anger. When there is a sense that their father is impossible to please, hope dissipates.

This New Testament teaching is in clear contrast to Roman instruction—via such authors as Xenophon, Seneca and Plutarch—who recommended that children should be led into honorable practices by encouragement and reason. While encouragement and reason are

important, they are insufficient because a child’s will and ability to reason are not adequately developed; thus, discipline, correction, and admonition become necessary.¹⁶ That’s why Paul exhorted believing fathers to train and admonish their children in ways prescribed by the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another foundational New Testament passage that uses parallelism with a new twist is found in passages such as 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12. Though Paul apparently did not raise natural children, he raised what we might call *spiritual* children. Paul uses the term *father* to describe his relationship to Timothy, Titus, Silas, and many others. He recognizes this authority as coming from God and thus regularly employs phrases such as “like a father.”

Even though Paul served as a spiritual father, his desire was not that his “children” would reflect his character. It was that his children would love in such a way that they would reflect God’s character, responding to the love of their heavenly Father. This spiritualizing of fatherhood is essential in New Testament theology, as it echoes the Old Testament proclamation, “I will be a Father to the fatherless” (Ps 68:5). How will God accomplish this, except through the example of earthly fathers who will defend the orphan and the widow?

THE REALITIES OF NATURAL FATHER CLOSENESS IN THE CHURCH

Although being spiritually fathered can minimize and displace the negative effects of natural fathering, it is necessary for the church to wrestle with the impact of closeness to a natural father. If men have a healthy sense of father closeness while growing up, it gives them a decisive advantage in regulating non-marital sexual behaviors and in being more satisfied in their family relationships. In a data set from the Promise Keepers movement ($n=993$), men who described a close relationship with their natural father reported significantly lower usage of pornography, fewer struggles with masturbation, and less fantasizing about non-marital sexual relationships. In addition, men who experienced deeper father closeness with their father growing up were more satisfied in their current fathering role and marriage.

These conclusions reveal that the early experiences

in natural father closeness have a profound effect on adult behaviors and satisfactions. This finding calls for follow-up study to determine, for the men who had poor or non-existent relationships with their fathers, what intervening variables helped them in their journey to overcome the loss and effects of this fatherlessness.

So how can churches help fathers to become living reflections of the fatherhood of God? First, there is a need for modeling, where men see examples of father closeness. Spiritual leaders in the faith community (pastors, elders, deacons and teachers) can be front-line examples and models to men who have been abandoned by their natural fathers. When a group of Christian men were asked, “Who has most influenced your development as a man and impacted you the most between ages 21 and 40 years?” the most common responses fell under the category of leaders in their church. This puts a tremendous responsibility on leaders, but it is one that God can enable them to perform. If they find themselves wanting and overwhelmed with responsibilities, or even battle-weary, they have a Father who will hold them up.

In addition, having a small group to disclose personal challenges and to support men in difficult transitions is another powerful asset. Fathers who participate in a small group have significantly higher fathering, family life, and marital satisfaction scores compared to fathers who do not participate in a small group. This finding supports other research that demonstrates the value of small groups outside the church, especially for the development of fathers.¹⁷

FATHERS AND SMALL GROUPS IN THE CHURCH

Although there are many ways to engage fathers—to help them to process the effects of fatherlessness, or to develop as fathers—facilitating a small group appears to be one of the most effective. Why? As noted by other researchers, most social behavior occurs in groups. When fathers get together to compare and to discuss issues that arise related to their fathering, learning is enhanced.

Small groups can have a powerful impact on how individuals learn. The notion of “cooperative learning” is

richly demonstrated in fatherhood groups. When asked after a group meeting, “What was most helpful insight a father gained?” fathers reported that the shared experience in listening to other men was most helpful, particularly when a failure or shortcoming was revealed.¹⁸ This listening also prepared and helped fathers to form new ways of thinking and to develop new habits related to their fathering.

In addition, small groups help the men significantly areas such as the following:

- a willingness to take on difficult tasks and to persist in working toward accomplishing goals, even in challenging situations such as fathering a teen or a step-child;
- long-term retention of what is learned in group meetings;
- higher-level reasoning and critical thinking, with gains in the capacity to transfer learning from one situation to another (from the group, to the individual, to the home, and vice-versa);
- empathy and support, particularly for fathers facing challenging issues such as unemployment, court-supervised visitation, and complex fathering situations.

The small groups fostered “promotive interaction” as dads encouraged and facilitated one another’s efforts to reach their goals. This included giving and receiving possible financial help and assistance, exchanging resources and information, giving and receiving feedback, challenging one another’s reasoning, advocating increased efforts to achieve, mutually influencing one another’s reasoning and behavior, and engaging in the interpersonal and small-group skills needed for effective teamwork. In essence, the small-group dynamic can mirror the work within the Body of Christ as a whole when it is fully functioning and engaged in equipping fathers.

In recent years, I have come to believe that one of the best small-group experiences that I can facilitate involves a father and his child. The development of the Father-Daughter Summit, where fathers dedicate a day to interact with their daughters and to prepare them for a “rite of passage,” has been one of the most gratifying accomplishments of my career. During this event, two generations meet to discuss how they are interfacing

and how they can better support, listen, challenge, and love one another. Then, they verbalize what their shared relationship means to each of them. Fathers and daughters consistently rate this experience as one of the most valuable days they have ever spent together.

Participation in worship is another significant contributor for men who are seeking to overcome their lack of father closeness or abandonment in childhood. The hearing of the gospel and the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship has both a healing and solidifying impact on male behavior.

WHY THE SOURCE CODE OF SCRIPTURE, FATHER CLOSENES, SMALL GROUPS, AND WORSHIP ARE NECESSARY

The depth of father abandonment and pain that can be associated with father loss has a significant impact on the mental and emotional well-being of adult men throughout adulthood. In another study, when asked about their fathers, roughly 45% of men reported either mixed or dissatisfied feelings about that relationship. What is strikingly important is that even though the childhood satisfaction of these individuals was low, this low childhood satisfaction did not strongly relate to their current fathering, marital, and family life satisfaction—unless their abandonment and father absence had been coupled with other negative behaviors such as abuse and parental divorce. In those circumstances, fathering, marital satisfaction, and family life satisfaction are significantly affected in negative ways by the cascade of issues.

Also, adult males who experienced the effects of father loss report higher levels of stress, view and purchase pornography more frequently, have deeper resentments when wronged, and struggle more deeply to forgive others. Adult women who rate their relationship with their father growing up as poor also rate their current emotional, mental and physical health significantly lower when compared to women who reported their relationship with their father as good or excellent. These women have greater difficulty honoring their spouse; they also experience higher measures of shame and feelings of rejection coupled with lower mothering satisfaction.

These sobering data make the case that an infusion of healthy spiritual fathering—via a relationship to a heavenly Father and through the transforming of one’s mind to learn the heart of the heavenly Father, coupled with worship, small-group participation, and prayer—is needed in the lives of a significant number of adults in our churches.

A GATEWAY TO HEALING

Jesus opened up fatherhood in a profound and powerful way. Mark records his cry in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you” (Mark 14:36). Jesus “spoke to God like a child to its father, simply, inwardly, and confidently; Jesus’ use of *Abba* in addressing God reveals the heart of his relationship with God.”¹⁹ After his resurrection, Jesus said to Mary, “Go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and *your Father*, to my God and *your God*’” (John 20:17, emphasis added). This gives hope to every soul such that, even if one’s natural father connection is weak, there is another Father who invites him to come home.

When this paradigm is in place, our approach to fathering and to ministry to fathers in our churches will be dramatically different. It must invoke the power of the Spirit and the grace of the gospel. If we apply this Father-fueled relationship in caring for our children, fathering our children as the Father fathers us, generations will be drawn together.

Those who have this connection to the Father *through the Son* have the capacity to set a new course for their lives and to offer hope to others, particularly to the fatherless. Collectively, the church is designed to become a movement of healed healers in which one of the most spiritual forms of service could be simply being a dad. When such fathers have their passions ignited by the image and power of Elijah, hearts are transformed. When younger generations see the hearts of their fathers turned toward the Father, they too will be moved to turn their hearts upward.

When the spirit of Elijah works in a father’s heart (Mal 4:6), he will be prompted to restore relationships and convey blessings to his children. And as a son or daughter of the heavenly Father, restoration and renewal become both a present and future reality. Resentment,

bitterness, disgrace, and rejection can be cast into the sea. That's the destiny of individuals, small groups and churches that boldly walk in faith, celebrating their heavenly Father.

ENDNOTES

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one interest issue. Other issues included: money, health, work, marriage, retirement, sports, and so on.

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¹⁵C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 10 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 472. The commentators go on to say, "The hearts of the godly fathers and the ungodly sons are estranged from one another. The bond of union, vix. Common love to God is wanting. The fathers are ashamed of their children, the children of their fathers. This chasm between them Elijah is to fill up. Turning the heart of the fathers to the sons does not mean merely directing the love of the fathers to the sons once more, but also restoring the heart of the fathers in the sons, or giving to the sons the fathers' disposition and affections. Then will the heart of the sons also return to their fathers, turn itself towards them so that they will be like-minded with the pious fathers."

¹⁶Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 792-799.

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A Pastoral Response to Physical Abuse in the Family

HEATH LAMBERT

The statistics are staggering. Anywhere from one-fourth to one-third of women in the United States of America will be physically attacked by a man with whom they have a close relationship.¹ As shocking as this is, however, those

numbers are nearly worthless because many women will never report the abuse that they suffer. This means the scandal of abuse is much worse than these percentages. Furthermore, the real impact of physical abuse is seen in the stories of pain and brokenness from the people who experience it: Sue has been married for ten years and last night—for the very first time—her husband shoved her into the wall; Bridget lives in fear of her husband's periodic explosions which have on occasion resulted in him slapping her repeatedly; Linda has quietly endured violent beatings from her husband every week for five years.²

These stories could be multiplied to include hundreds, thousands, millions of women who are experiencing the physical and spiritual pain of

abuse from men who are called by God to protect them. These are situations that pastors, biblical counselors, and other Christian ministers will confront. The only question is whether there will be wisdom to engage both the abused and the abusers in ways that offer help and hope centered in Christ and based on his Word. The purpose of this article is to attempt to add to the wisdom of the church by answering three important questions about the nature of physical abuse in the home. First, what is abuse? Second, can abusers change? Third, how should ministers respond to issues of physical violence?

It may be helpful to observe at the beginning that I have experienced childhood physical abuse at the hands of my mother; she was addicted to alcohol until I was a teenager. I have also counseled many people in the aftermath of physical abuse at the hands of those to whom they are closest. Though my experience as both an abused person and a minister helping the abused has shaped my thinking, this article is not anchored in my experience. Instead, it is anchored in the pages of God's Word which wisely, sufficiently, and relevantly addresses the theme of abuse and offers counsel both to attackers and to the attacked.



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WHAT IS WRONG WITH PHYSICAL ABUSE?

Physical abuse of a wife is clearly wrong, but why? Does this sound like a question that's too basic? It shouldn't. The answer to this question is important for two reasons. First, we want to establish every matter not upon our own thoughts and opinions but according to the standards of God's Word. Second, as a complementarian, I am concerned about the connection that many make between the authority of a husband in the context of the home and physical abuse.³ The argument is made from time to time that the authority structure in complementarian homes can lead husbands to abuse their wives and children. It is important to demonstrate that there is no such necessary link. To the contrary, a full embrace of biblical complementarianism should result in husbands who would die to protect their families.

In the simplest terms, abuse is the wrong use ("ab" + "use") of power by force, sex, or manipulation to coerce persons under authority to do what those in authority desire them to do. With regard to authority, the Bible is clear that a husband does possess authority over his wife (Eph 5:22-33, Col 3:18-19). This authority, however, is qualified by the authority of Christ and thus has limits. It is crucial to affirm that whenever a husband uses any form of physical force against his wife, it is a wrong use of his authority. It is never, under any circumstances, appropriate for a husband to use physical force against his wife for the purpose of compelling her submission to his authority. A husband abuses his wife whenever he uses physical force against her. To understand why this is the case, it is necessary to understand several important principles of authority in Scripture.

The Bible teaches triadic authority. This principle teaches that God mediates his sovereign authority over human beings through three institutions—the family, the church, and the state. God imposes a structure of authority in each of these institutions for the purpose of ordering society, restraining sin, and advancing the cause of the gospel in the world. A person operating in any of these spheres tangibly submits to the authority of God by submitting to the authority in each of these areas. Furthermore, God implements his authority in each

institution by authorizing the use of some kind of force against those who violate the structure of authority in that particular institution. For example, in Romans 13:1-4 the apostle Paul says,

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer (NASB).

In this passage, Paul says that God has placed the state in a position of authority and that whoever resists that authority resists God and will rightfully receive the penalty of the sword. The sword here is an expression used to indicate that the government has divine sanction to use force against citizens who violate God's sovereignty as mediated through the state. The state can engage in a wrongful use of this authority, but that is not the point here. For now, it is enough to see that the state does have divine sanction to use force to impose its will.

The church also has power to enforce its authority, though this looks a bit different. In Matthew 18:15-18, Jesus says,

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witness. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound

in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

In Matthew, Jesus teaches that the church has the power of the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:19) with the authority to bind unrepentant members for the purpose of discipline. Jesus gives the church his authority to enforce indictments against the sin of its members by removing them from the fellowship of the church. It is possible for the church to engage in a wrongful use of this authority, but the point here is that it does possess the power to enforce its will against its members.

Finally, the Bible teaches that there is inherent and enforceable authority in the context of the home.

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with the rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol (Prov 23:13-14).

These and other passages provide biblical sanction for parents to enforce their authority with the use of corporal discipline. There are many tragic cases of parents who abuse this authority and abuse their children, but the Bible is clear that parents do have enforceable authority.

God has granted authority, and corollary enforcements of his authority are warranted in all three institutions ordained by him. Authority inherent in the state is enforceable by the sword. Authority in the church is enforceable by removal from the church. Authority in the home is enforceable by the use of the rod. Reading these examples, there is a notable absence. God has granted men authority to lovingly lead their wives and children. However, God allows men to enforce their authority with their children alone. That is to say that, though husbands possess authority over their wives, God never grants them the prerogative to enforce that authority.

This teaching is seen every time the Bible discusses the complementary roles of husbands and wives. When the Bible discusses the responsibilities of a wife to submit, it always places the responsibility for submission on the wife, never on the husband. Whether a wife submits or not is her responsibility. It is never the responsibility

of a husband to bring his wife into submission through force. Instead, men are called to lead their wives in a loving way. This will often mean (among many other things) challenging, exhorting, and encouraging wives to be submissive to their authority. It will never mean enforcing that authority. In marriage, the only “coercion” a husband may use to motivate his wife to submit is his kind, humble, and sacrificial treatment of his wife.

This means that the relationship between a husband and a wife is unique among all other relationships of authority in God’s world. Though the husband exists in a state of authority, the husband does not have biblical sanction to enforce this authority. For the purposes this article, it is enough to observe that this truth will rule out—on biblical and theological grounds—any forceful acts by a man against his wife. Whenever a man engages in any such behavior, it is a wrongful use of power and, therefore, abuse in any and every case.

Excursus: Corporal Discipline of Children

Though this article principally is about a husband’s abuse of a wife, a brief excursus into fatherly physical abuse is essential because of the close proximity of the issues in the home, and because force against children must be regulated. As was demonstrated above, parents may use force against their children to correct disobedience. The use of such force is sometimes summarized in Scripture as “the rod.” Instruction about the rod in Scripture is not, however, a blank check for fathers or mothers to use any forceful means to impose their authority. Though parents may use some measure of force against their children, it is still possible to abuse them. Because that is true, it is important to examine some biblical themes that regulate and control parental use of force against their children. There are at least five principles to consider briefly.

First, the biblical encouragement for the use of the rod is balanced by the biblical teaching that the rod should be used in a controlled way. In the passage from Proverbs quoted above, the text says, “If you strike him with the rod, he will not die.” There is a clear and unmistakable implication in this passage that the parent using the rod against his child is not doing so with dangerous or murderous force. The inspired author is not con-

cerned that the use of the rod will kill the child, because his assumption is that the parent is spanking his child in a controlled way.

Second, the biblical encouragement for the use of the rod is balanced by the biblical teaching that parents (especially fathers) must not provoke their children to wrath. Ephesians 6:4 commands, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath.” In context, the clearest way to avoid provoking one’s children to wrath is to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This principle does not exclude, however, avoiding other acts that exasperate children such as cruel, violent, and harsh treatment.

Third, the biblical encouragement for the use of the rod is balanced by the biblical call to love. Jesus says “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39). Jesus Christ summarizes the entire law into a command to love both God and neighbor. For fathers, some of their closest neighbors are their children. An unloving father who does not know how to nurture and care for his children within his home cannot hope to progress in the call to love his neighbors beyond his home.

Fourth, the biblical encouragement for the use of the rod is balanced by the biblical teaching to avoid sinful anger. In Ephesians 4:31, Paul says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” No Christian—fathers included—has biblical permission to give full vent to anger even with their children. When this biblical truth is paired with the biblical call to grow in the spiritual fruit of gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:23), a picture comes into focus of a man who disciplines his children with a hand that is firm yet gentle and controlled.

Finally, the biblical encouragement for the use of the rod is balanced by the biblical teaching that discipline—though punitive—is restorative in nature.⁴ The writer of Hebrews draws a parallel between divine discipline and earthly, paternal discipline. The motivation behind the discipline of both divine and human fathers is the same. Hebrews 12:11 says, “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” This passage points to a motivation of discipline that is restorative leading to good, peaceful,

and righteous fruit. When this is the motivation behind discipline, the method of the rod should correspond and itself be good, peaceful, and righteous.

So though fathers are commanded to enforce their authority in a tangible way, there are a number of principles that regulate that physical force. When such principles are understood, it is possible to say that a father abuses his child when physical force not employed for the purpose of restoring the child but is employed for the purpose of venting the father’s sinful and uncontrolled anger. This is a wrongful use of paternal or maternal power even if there are no physical marks and even if it is done with the approval of the surrounding culture.

At a fundamental level, abuse is just one manifestation of sinful rage that God forbids, and wants to be transformed. When a man uses any force against his wife or improper force against his children, he does so out of a heart that has been denied its lust for power, comfort, sex, or any number of other things (Jas 4:1-2). It is sinful and should be repented of before God and those whom he has wronged. It is to this topic that we must now turn.

CAN ABUSERS CHANGE?

Persons on the giving and receiving end of abuse can feel overwhelmed by despair, believing that things can never be different than the way they are. It is common for many to believe that once a person is an abuser, he will always be an abuser. The purpose here is to examine whether this is true.

Two items will be mentioned by way of response. The first response is anecdotal. I have counseled a number of couples for whom abuse has been a difficulty. The couples who have experienced brokenness before God over their sin, and have earnestly pursued counsel, accountability, and a grace-motivated plan for change have seen true and lasting change take place. All of the couples I know who have done this are, as far as I know, now living in homes that are free from abuse. The reason this is the case is not because I am such a wonderful counselor or because these couples have been so incredible. The reason this is true has to do with the second response, which is biblical.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul is dealing with people who

are struggling with serious patterns of sinfulness and he says,

Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:9-12).

This passage does not mention abuse specifically but rather mentions the hope that persons struggling with enslaving sins can have for change. Paul runs through a list of sins regarding which many believe change is impossible (such as homosexual activity). After giving these exemplary cases of difficult sins, Paul admits how serious they are, declaring that people who do those things cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Then, Paul gives hope. He says, ‘and such were some of you.’ Paul’s point is that even though these sins may be a source of struggle for believers, they do not define the believer. Believers do not live and die by the label of their particular sin. Instead they are under the new label of being *in Christ*. Because Jesus has washed, sanctified, and justified believers, they are set free from sin. This does not mean that believers never sin, but there is a power to change for even the most difficult and enslaving sins.

This is true of abuse as well. By the power of the resurrected Christ, abusers can change. Persons who say that abusers can never change are attempting to make a sobering declaration about abuse. I understand that. Abuse *is* sobering. In this passage, however, Paul makes a sobering statement about the gospel of Jesus. To say that an abuser (or a homosexual, or a thief, or an adulterer) cannot change is to deny this text of Scripture and thus to slander the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus loves to take revilers and turn them into givers of honor. Jesus loves to take the angry heart of an abuser and turn it in to the peaceful heart of a servant. Jesus loves to take an abused person’s fearful heart of despair and, by his grace, give her a heart full of strong and courageous hope.

This biblical teaching is certainly not a reason for an abuser or an abused person to sit around and wait, with fingers crossed and wishing for change. It is a call to cry out for help to Jesus and others. It is a call to repent deeply and to fight for change in the context of a wise and loving community of believers. Precisely how this community should offer counsel is the object of the next question.

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO INSTANCES OF PHYSICAL ABUSE?

Most of the space in this article will be devoted to very practical considerations about how to respond when a husband physically abuses his wife.⁵ As such a response is examined, it is important to keep a few things in mind. First, I am writing as a pastor and, therefore, am thinking pastorally. If you are a Christian friend of someone who is being abused, you should seek counsel from those in spiritual authority over you, and you should implore your friend to get help.

Second, ministry is always situational and case-specific. I am going to provide some guidelines to keep in mind when doing ministry in the aftermath of physical abuse, but such generalities may not be appropriate for every situation. Because interpersonal ministry is always tailor-made, seek the wisdom of God in prayer and hear the wisdom of others in conversation. That said, I wish to propose a fivefold strategy for ministry after you learn that a man has physically abused his wife.

Listen

Do not underestimate the importance of listening for your ministry. Listening to a woman who has been abused is the first way you can show care to her. She has endured a terrifying betrayal of trust and—in all likelihood—will find it difficult to share her experience. It is possible that the woman addressing you has told others who have not believed her, or who have been unwilling or unable to offer an appropriate response. A wife in such a situation may be more grateful than you can imagine simply to speak with someone who listens, understands, and is willing to offer help.

As you listen to an abused wife, it will be particularly important for you to find out answers to questions

like: How long has the abuse been happening? How often does it happen? When does it tend to happen? How severe is the abuse? Have children been exposed to the abuse? Have they seen it happen or been recipients of it themselves? What would your husband's response be if he knew you were talking about the abuse?

You need to listen to the wife, but you also need to develop a plan to listen to the husband. Wise ministry will always seek to minister to both sides of the equation: both the abused and abuser. As Christians who are called to love and minister even to our enemies, and who are aware of the devastating effects of human sinfulness, we believe that even the abuser is a victim of his abuse in some sense.⁶ Such a man needs help to pursue change. Ministry to the abused and abuser will look different. Yet both will begin in the same place: listening. It is important to mention a few things to keep in mind as you seek to listen to the abuser.

As you seek to listen to an abusive husband, one phrase to keep in mind is restoration not stigmatization. Abusers are guilty of egregious sin against their wives and against God. They must be confronted with this sin and urged to confess their sin and pursue change vigorously. As true as that is, we never want abusers to sense that we are against them. The goal in ministry to an abuser—is as long as he will receive such ministry—is to see him be restored to his family, and ultimately to Christ. A minister must communicate a fierce willingness to protect the abused. Yet this need must not be placed at odds with ministry to the husband. It should be understood and communicated to the husband and wife that each one needs ministry for the good of their marriage.

As you seek to listen to an abusive husband, it is also helpful to try and figure out what he was wanting when he hurt his wife. One of the most profound things the Bible teaches about our behavior is that it always springs from motives that are seated deep within our hearts (Mark 7:14-23). Abusive anger spews out of a heart that has been denied its lusts and wants to punish someone. When you can understand from an abuser what desires led to the abuse, you will understand the twisted logic of his sin. You will be equipped to offer wise, relevant, case-specific wisdom about how to pursue Christ-centered change in the situation.

As you listen to an abusive husband, be wise in when and how you do so. It is not necessarily wise for you to talk to the husband with his wife present. Furthermore, it is not necessarily wise for you to speak to an abusive husband immediately after you have spoken to his wife. Finally, it is not necessarily wise for you to speak to an abuser alone. In a situation where you are dealing with a man who is murderously violent you should, in fact, do none of these things. In such cases it is better to wait, be sure the wife is safe, involve the authorities, and not meet alone with a dangerous man. We will unpack these issues more in a bit. The point here is to be willing to listen. Because ministry, as was noted above, is case-specific, if you listen well, it will keep you from trying to solve a problem that does not exist.

Consider Whether and How to Involve Law Enforcement⁷

Laws about reporting abuse vary from state to state, so it is always wise to check on the requirements for your area, but Kentucky is similar to many other states. In Kentucky, most people are required to report abuse to the authorities when they become aware of it. This requirement stands unless the abused person requests that the offense not be reported. If a minister receives such a request he still may report the abuse, but is no longer required to report it. This stipulation will often make it necessary for ministers to make a judgment call about how to involve the authorities. There are several guardrails that will govern this decision.

First, integrity and honest dealing should govern your interaction with the woman who has come for help. Inform the wife that you are required to report abuse unless she asks that you not do so. If she asks you not to report, but you believe that reporting is necessary, explain this and try to persuade her. If you disagree, you must inform her of your intention to report against her wishes. You should do this in love and with great care, taking time to explain your concerns and your belief that this will be the most helpful action. You should also understand that she will likely be quite upset with you. Finally, you should be aware that for the most part, the authorities are powerless to help if the victim will not corroborate your claim. This means that your report

may not amount to much. The point advanced here is that you should be honest. If you are dishonest or less than forthcoming, you will add your betrayal to her husband's betrayal and make your work more difficult.

Second, you must protect the weak. The civil authorities are a God-ordained instrument to protect the weak as Romans 13 teaches. Furthermore, they have specific means at their disposal to help them in this work. As true as this is, there are limitations to the protection they offer. As noted above, if a wife will not corroborate the abuse, there is little the authorities can do. Even if she does, the protection they offer in the form of limited periods in jail, emergency protective orders, and restraining orders are not full-proof. The harsh reality that everyone admits is that if a man desires to hurt his wife badly enough, there is little anyone can do to stop him. Having said that, Christians should use all means at their disposal to help abused women. The civil authorities are one way to do this.

A third issue to consider with regard to involving the authorities in an instance of physical abuse is that informing the authorities can help prevent further instances of abuse. One research study found that calling the police after an episode of domestic violence created a strong deterrent against repeat offenses of domestic violence.⁸ This study showed that the deterrent is effective even if there is no arrest made. This, of course, makes eminent biblical sense as sin loves to hide in the darkness and so flees when exposed to the light (Eph 5:7-14). This one is a powerful principle that urges us to make a report of violence.

Ultimately, there are not easy, one-size-fits-all answers on this issue. If a man hit his wife for the first time in fifteen years, if you find out two weeks after it happened, and if he seems humble and repentant while she seems safe and unafraid, you might submit to the wife's request that you not report the incident. If a woman comes to you covered in bruises saying that her husband has been regularly hitting her for months, you certainly should not submit to her request. Things get more difficult as we move away from these extremes and toward the center. The rules of thumb are to err on the side of keeping women safe and to obey the law. After that, be humble, be honest, express genuine and long-

term care for your counselee, pray, and seek wisdom from others you trust.

Involve the Church

When all is said and done, the civil authorities may or may not be involved. One group that must necessarily be involved is the body of believers. Ministers of the gospel called by Christ to equip the saints for ministry should be concerned that we live in a culture that does not see it as the responsibility of the church to meet the spiritual and physical needs of its hurting members. This is what ministry is, and it is repeatedly commanded in Scripture. I have had too many conversations with too many ministers whose only idea about ministry in the aftermath of abuse is to call the authorities and pray. There is much, much more to be done.

The church must be mobilized to care for the abused. Women may need a safe place to stay with their children. They may need food and clothing for a time. They may need long-term financial help if restoration proves impossible. (A church in such a situation should consider helping a woman pay for her children's school or for her own education as she tries to get a job to support her family). They may need to provide childcare. They may need to help getting kids back and forth to school. They will always need to provide the sort of Christian friendship that provides the opportunity for candid and loving counsel, for tears, and even for laughter. We live in a church culture that desperately needs to rediscover that it is not the responsibility of government agencies and social workers to provide these services. God calls his church to fulfill these responsibilities.

The church needs to be mobilized to care for the abusive husband. It is not the abused wife alone that needs help. The husband needs ministry too, and it is the responsibility of the church to provide it. Church members will need to be mobilized to go and confront an abusive husband. If such a man is repentant, he may need a place to stay for a time so that his wife and children can remain in their home. He may need food. He will certainly need accountability, as well as Christian friends who can speak into his life as he grows and changes. Furthermore, for a time, he may need church members to supervise visits he has with his wife and

children. Ultimately, if he is unrepentant, he will need the church to bear testimony against his sin through a process of church discipline so that his spirit may be saved at the last day (cf. 1 Cor 5:5).

The above are a dozen examples of the many different ways that the church can be called upon to minister in the fog of post-abuse ministry. One thing is certain: no minister can do all of this by himself. In fact, I am persuaded that the reason many Christian ministers throw up their hands and send people exclusively to the civil authorities is that they are made weary by all that needs to be done. The load can and should be shared by a body of believers instead of just one person.

If at all possible, restore the couple to each another in a wise way

The goal of ministry in the aftermath of abuse should be the effort to restore couples to each another in a way that reflects biblical wisdom. Obviously a couple should not be restored to the same house and a normal relationship if the abuser is unrepentant or still a threat. There should never be any action taken that would expose a woman to that kind of danger. Instead, if a husband is repentant and vigorously pursuing change, then—in light of the power of Christ to change abusers—couples can have hope that God can restore their relationship.

In order to do this, the church must work closely with the couple so that the wife is always protected and safe. A man who has been consistently violent towards his wife will need to be separated from her for a time to receive counseling and to re-establish trust. As ministry toward the couple begins, it may be that the only time he sees his wife is during the periods of counseling. The goal should be to increase these times together slowly and then add other times for them to be together in a supervised way (both as a pair and with their children). From here, the couple should move to spending time together in an unsupervised way with the ultimate goal of living together under the same roof. As ministry proceeds with the couple, pastors and other Christians, we look for signs of genuine repentance from the man. We want to balance this repentance with deliberate and steady progress in the restoration of the couple. As such progress happens, it is essential to ensure that that the

wife is safe and that she feels comfortable with the speed of progress.

Involve the Couple in Intensive Counseling

We live in a church culture that most often refers church members struggling with abuse to counselors outside of the church. This is unfortunate, given that the Bible is rich in wisdom concerning the relevant issues. As an abused person and as a minister who helps the abused, I have not encountered an issue that God does not address somehow in the pages of his Word.

This reality does not mean that a person with a seminary degree or a person in vocational ministry necessarily possesses wisdom about these biblical principles. This reality, instead, is an encouragement to get knowledge. Ministers should study the Scriptures, seeking wisdom about responding to abuse. Ministers should also read good books and articles about abuse (which are often hard to find). Above all, when you become aware that abuse is happening in your church (as it likely is), seek the wisdom of others who have walked the road before so you can be of most help. The following are a few things to keep in mind as you minister to a couple.

First, emphasize the nature of abuse. James 4:1-2 says, “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.” Abuse is an angry, violent fit of rage. In his Word, God tells us that anger grows in a heart that desires something it has not received. The logic of anger says, “I want this thing (it could be sex, submission, dinner, peace and quiet, or a million other things), and if you do not give it to me I will punish you.” Fundamentally, abuse is about controlling another person to get what one wants.

This is a significant problem because Christians in general (Phil 2:1-11) and husbands in particular (Eph 5:25-33) are supposed to exemplify sacrificial service. Husbands are not called to fight for their own desires with physical punishment. Instead, they are called to lay down their lives for the well-being of their wives. Nothing is further from this biblical vision than physical abuse against women.

Such a biblical understanding of abuse is very sobering. Mere behavior modification will not be enough to transform an abusive husband. Resolving to change is not enough. Taking deep breaths will not ultimately help. Counting to ten will not work either. The Bible teaches that change for the abuser must happen at a deep level in his heart. All the strategies in the world to delay, manage, or relocate anger to another source cannot change an abuser. An abusive husband needs a change of heart. A man who hits his wife needs to exchange his selfish heart for a selfless heart that desires to serve others. This is impossible for anyone to do on their own; this explains why so many men have trouble changing their abusive behavior.

Second, emphasize the gospel of God's grace. It is truly impossible for an abusive man to change his heart on his own. This reality does not mean, however, that change is impossible. As Jesus said in a different context, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26). The glorious reality of the gospel of grace, as was noted above, is that God can change the heart of an abuser. In Romans 6:1-4 Paul says,

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Because believers have been united to Christ in his life, death, and resurrection, they should take no part in sin. "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14). This verse plainly teaches that grace includes power to defeat sin. Grace is the only power strong enough to break the hold of abuse in the heart of a selfish believer.

Third, emphasize the necessity of repentance and forgiveness. Martin Luther began his Ninety-Five Theses with the words, "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said 'Repent,' he called for the entire life of

believers to be one of repentance." The apostle John said,

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).

This means that the way Christians lay hold of the gospel of grace is by confessing their sins and receiving Christ's forgiveness and power for change. Because this is true, counseling abusive husbands requires guiding them toward an encounter with God where they confess their sinful actions and heart attitudes, begging Christ for forgiveness and for the power to change. They must do so with confidence that, in Christ, they will receive what they seek.

Abusive husbands also must be required humbly to repent of their sin to their wives. Repentance is not just vertical, but is also horizontal. Proverbs 28:13 says, "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." Abusive husbands must expose their sins not only to God, but also to the wives and others whom they have harmed. Those who obtain mercy need not only to confess but also to forsake their sin. This is very important. There must be fruit in keeping with repentance (Matt 3:8). This is why restoration of a couple in the aftermath of abuse must be steady, but slow. There must be time to see fruit and to demonstrate that repentance is genuine. Pastors must be incredibly wary of tears and statements about a commitment to change. Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow can look alike on the outside, but only godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Cor 7:8-11).

An abused wife also may need to repent of her own sin. Let me be very clear about this as it will be easy to misunderstand: *I am not saying that a wife is ever responsible for the abuse she receives at the hands of her husband.* If the Bible teaches anything about sin, it is that the responsibility rests on the person who committed it. Whenever a man physically abuses his wife, he may never shift the blame for his sin onto his wife with statements like, "If she had been more submissive I would not have hit her." Statements like this are a wicked

attempt to shift the responsibility for sin onto another.

Having said that, the Bible also teaches that no person should ever overlook one's own sin in favor of focusing on the sin of others. This is the point of Matthew 7:1-5. Ministers who want to help couples change in a way that most honors Christ will urge both husband and wife to consider their sins against God and one another. For a wife, this will mean making it clear that abuse is an egregious sin for which she is not responsible, while still asking what sins she might have committed that need to be confessed. Has she been rebellious toward her husband? Was she violent towards him? Has she been guilty of any cruel or unloving treatment toward him? Such issues are not the first items that a wise minister will pursue, but they should be addressed at some point.

Finally, couples (especially wives) must be confronted with the biblical command to forgive. This will often be very challenging and so ministers must proceed slowly here, but very deliberately. Women who have been abused must be confronted with the command of Jesus that because we are forgiven sinners we must forgive our fellow Christians from the heart (Matt 18:21-35). Jesus' words in this regard changed my own life. After enduring years of physical abuse from my mother, I hated her. After a few years of being a Christian, however, I realized that the call of Christ on my life was to forgive and show love to my assailant. Such forgiveness will never mean that a woman should be restored to a violent situation. It will also not mean that an abusive man pays no consequences. It will mean abused persons are free to let go of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice and are empowered to exercise kind, tender-hearted forgiveness (Eph 4:31-32).

Fourth, emphasize instruction on God's use of suffering in the Christian life. In the aftermath of any difficult marital issue, couples can be left wondering why such horrible things would happen. This is certainly the case in the wake of abuse. Couples get married hoping for the fairy-tale and now a black eye and shattered dreams have them reeling with questions like, "Why did this happen?" The Bible's answer to this is as shocking as it is clear,

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials

of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (Jas 1:2-4).

This passage explains a biblical response to suffering and provides a rationale for it.

The response to trials of various kinds—like abuse—is to count it all joy. I tremble as I write that sentence. Many who read this will be outraged, and I understand that. It is an outrageous statement. It is also the truth of God. How are we to count it all joy when we meet trials? Isn't that absurd? The mist begins to lift, however, when the object of rejoicing in the passage is understood. Christians do not rejoice at the suffering. No woman should be happy that she is being abused. Christians look at what God is doing and rejoice in that.

Christians do not rejoice at the suffering, but Christians do look at what God is doing and rejoice in his purposes. According to the inspired words of James, the goal of all suffering is to make the Christian steadfast, lacking in nothing. This truth means that God is able to accomplish through suffering that which he could not do apart from suffering. Jesus Christ chooses to work within our pain to make us more like himself. Embracing this truth requires giving attention to two important matters.

The biblical teaching is not an argument for women to remain in an abusive situation. There are too many passages teaching that abuse is something from which persons should flee for any responsible Bible interpreter to conclude such a thing (1 Sam 19:10; Prov 22:3; Luke 4:29-30; John 8:59; 1 Cor 6:19-20). James 1 is not a chain that shackles women to abuse. Instead, it is a key that frees them from believing that the pain they have experienced is purposeless. It gives them hope to believe that even in abuse—as in all the pain we experience in a sinful world—God is able to work to overrule the sinful purposes of wicked people so that what they intended for evil, he intends for good (Gen 50:20).

This teaching in James is also one that requires wisdom (Jas 1:5-8). Ministers need to arrive here slowly and carefully. Ministers must pray with and for the women to whom this teaching comes that the Lord

would impart it by his grace.

Fifth, emphasize the importance of intimate communion in marriage. The goal of ministry in the aftermath of abuse is not merely to stop the hitting. Post-abuse ministry is a long, slow road down which the cessation of violence is merely a portion of the journey. The violence has to be replaced with a tender, peaceful, and self-sacrificial relationship. Couples need to learn how to pursue repentance and reconciliation in other areas as well because violence is never the only problem they face. Couples need to learn how to pursue the Lord and abide in Christ both as individuals and together.⁹ Couples need to learn how to engage in constructive, humble, honest conversations where they express their joys, frustrations, concerns, dreams, and questions. Couples need to learn how to die to self, and serve their partner in a God-glorifying sexual relationship. These are just a few examples that encourage ministers that their job of counseling is not finished when the violence ends.

Sixth, emphasize the importance of discipleship and mutual accountability. All sin happens in the dark. God teaches us by his grace to expose the darkness and live in the light (Eph 5:8-12). Couples need to learn to walk in community with other godly couples who can confront them, help them, remind them of the gospel, and stir them up towards love and good deeds. None of us can change alone, and sin cannot thrive in community. One tool for long-term change therefore is to connect couples with other mature Christians who can walk with them in Christ-centered, intentional relationships.

PHYSICAL ABUSE AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

Physical abuse is a horrific problem. Ministers can have confidence, however, that Scripture equips them to understand what abuse is and how to minister to abused people. Ministers can know that the gospel of our mighty Christ is sufficient to empower abusive men and abused women to change so that they become more like him.

ENDNOTES

¹Helen M. Eigengerg, *Women Battering in the United*

States: Till Death Do Us Part (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2001), 62-85; P. Tjaden and N. Thoennes, *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence against Women: Findings from the National Violence against Women Survey* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1998); R. M. Siegel, et al., "Screening for Domestic Violence in a Community Pediatric Setting," *Pediatrics* 104 (1999): 874-77.

²This is an article about responding to husbands who physically abuse their wives so the examples here reflect that. Of course there are many kinds of violence like verbal and sexual abuse. There are also fathers who abuse their children, women who abuse their kids and husbands and even children who abuse their parents. Those are simply not being considered here, though the principles unpacked will have implications for them.

³Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 405; Carolyn Holderraeed Heggen, "Religious Beliefs and Abuse," in *Women, Abuse, and the Bible* eds. Catherine Kroeger and James Beck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 15-17; Steven R. Tracy, "What Does 'Submit in Everything' Really Mean? The Nature and Scope of Marital Submission," *The Trinity Journal*, 29 (2008): 285-312.

⁴Spanking is a punishment, but the punishment is not restorative rather than retributive in nature. The logic of retribution says, "I am spanking you to pay you back." The logic of restoration says, "I am spanking you out of love to restore you to the love and blessing of our home."

⁵Space does not allow for the consideration of the more complex response involved in the physical abuse of children.

⁶For example, Paul teaches in Romans 2:5 that the sin of sinners serves to store up wrath against them.

⁷It is worth noting that in states like Kentucky domestic violence is not, strictly speaking, a law enforcement matter. When abuse is reported, it is generally handed over to Adult Protective Services (APS) who performs the investigation. Because I am not an attorney, and because laws are not exactly the same in every state this and all of the other information in this section should be compared against local laws.

⁸R. B. Felson, J. M. Ackerman, & C. A. Gallagher, "Police Intervention and the Repeat of Domestic Assault," *Criminology*, 43, (2005), 563-579.

⁹This theme of learning how to commune with Christ in the aftermath of abuse is a significant one that I have intentionally overlooked because it has been dealt with very well in another place. See, David Powlison, Paul David Tripp, and Edward T. Welch, "Pastoral Responses to Domestic Violence" in *Pastoral Leadership for Manhood and Womanhood* eds. Wayne Grudem and Dennis Rainey (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 265-276.



Research Brief: Effective Practices for Training Parents in Family Discipleship

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The purpose of this two-phase sequential mixed methods study was to explore best practices for training parents to pursue household family discipleship among churches identified as holding and conducting a family ministry philosophy and approach. This research used quantitative methods to measure parents' perception and practices, and qualitative methods to explore the best practices.

Expert panel: In order to establish a sample population, an expert panel was assembled. The expert panel consisted of nine individuals who have a significant voice in the evangelical world as it pertains to family ministry. The panel included representatives of the three primary models of family ministry—family-equipping, family-based, and family-integrated. The expert panel provided a list of churches that, in their estimation, conducted family ministry well. Sev-

enteen churches were nominated; twelve agreed to participate.

Phase One: Parental Perceptions and Practices: All eligible parents from each participating congregation were invited to take part in an online survey. The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey (FDPPS) was hosted by an online data collection service. The core questions of the survey had been previously validated, exhibiting a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.88. The entire survey, including requests for demographic information, consisted of twenty-five questions and should have taken no more than ten minutes to complete. The questions identified the parents' perception of their role and responsibility as well as gauging the household practices in which the parents engage on a regular basis. This first phase resulted in usable data from 933 parents.

Phase Two: Telephone Interviews and Case Studies: The second phase consisted of phone interviews with all nominated churches that were willing to participate. The interview explored the church's overall ministry approach and the specific plans or processes in place to equip and to encourage parents to become primary disciple-makers in their children's lives. In addition, three churches were selected to participate in case

studies. These churches were selected purposively based upon the high performance of parents on the survey instrument.

Key findings: One question that drove this research was, “To what degree do parents perceive their role and responsibility as primary disciple-makers, and in what ways do they practice family discipleship as a household parental responsibility?” In the participating churches, parents perceived themselves as primary disciple-makers to a very high degree. The data also indicated that perceptions, in the case of these churches, do correlate with behaviors.

One item on the survey requested agreement or disagreement, in degrees, with this statement: “Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.” The stronger the parents’ agreement with that statement, the more frequently the parents read or discussed the Bible with their children, the more frequently the parent discussed biblical or spiritual matters with their children while engaging in day-to-day activities, and the more frequently the parents engaged in family devotional or worship times.

Another item requested agreement or disagreement with this statement: “I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family’s schedule.” Stronger agreement with that statement correlated with higher frequencies of discussing the Bible, higher frequencies of discussing biblical or spiritual matters while engaging in day-to-day activities, and higher frequencies of family devotional or worship times. The patterns of prayer with children also related positively to prioritization of family devotional times. Interestingly, respondents with three or more children were more likely to prioritize family devotional times.

The stronger the disagreement with the statement, “I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now,” the higher the frequency in discussing the Bible, discussing biblical or spiritual matters during day-to-day activities, and engaging in family devotions or worship times in the home. The inverse is also true. For those respondents who indicated that they were presently too busy for family devotions or Bible read-

ings, the frequency of the assessed behaviors was lower.

The more someone agreed that the church is the primary place where children should receive their Bible teaching, the less likely they were to be engaged in any home-based family discipleship activities. These parents were also less likely to engage in discussions with others regarding the spiritual development of their families.

Through interviews with the twelve participating churches as well as the three case studies of churches that performed strongly on the FDPPS, it became clear that seven particular practices marked these churches. Churches where parents were deeply engaged in practices of family discipleship tended to engage in more of these seven practices. No church leaders or members were ever asked whether they engaged in any of these practices. The seven practices became apparent as data from interviews and case studies were coded and analyzed. No church’s practices looked identical. Although every congregation practiced one or more of these seven practices, each church did so in ways that were unique to the congregation’s context.

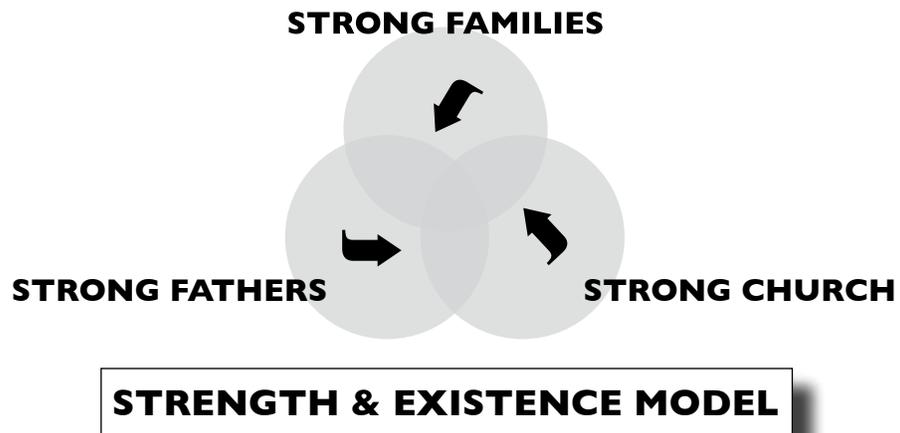
The majority of churches (8 out of 12) provided a take-home of some sort for parents to connect teachings at church with conversations in their homes. Almost every church that participated in the study provided some level of training beyond weekend worship celebrations; the most significant training was specifically aimed at men. Nine churches indicated specific, intentional efforts to protect the schedules of families by limiting church activities. Eight of the twelve churches had instituted what they referred to as home groups or family life groups—small groups that meet as families in homes. Ten of the twelve churches that participated in interviews did not have a children’s worship time separate from the larger community of faith. A handful of the churches practiced intentional hospitality and fellowship in addition to the hospitality and fellowship that take place at the home groups. The practice of preaching was quite often one of the first practices that the interviewees mentioned. Of the twelve churches interviewed, four specifically mentioned using “expository preaching” as a primary means of instructing parents on their roles as primary disciple-makers. Six other churches mentioned the significance of preaching,

teaching from the pulpit, or the message proclaimed in weekend worship celebrations.

Although much of the discussion related to family ministry has revolved around retaining young adults after they graduate from high school, not once in all the research did anyone suggest that their church's practices were for the sake of retention. Instead, all efforts fell into one or more of three categories. These categories—strong fathers, strong families, and a strong church—can be seen in the diagram below. Although these categories have certain characteristics that can and do stand alone, they appear to function in a coexistent manner. Second, the categories feed one another. Although churches will

have fragmented families, a biblical understanding of the family will recognize the unique role of the father. When the father is strong, this will help to facilitate strong families. When the families of the church are strong, this will strengthen the congregation. A strong church will seek to develop strong fathers, and so on.

Although exceptions were observed, one underlying key in the practices explored here was that, in churches where parents were most engaged in practices of family discipleship, age-segmented programs had been minimized (though not necessarily eliminated) while inter-generational activities had been maximized.



Seven Practices for Effective Equipping of Parents

<i>Churches ranked by mean scores on FDPPS</i>	Take-Home Guides	Focused Men's Training	Limit Activities to Protect Family Schedules	Home Groups	Integrated Worship	Hospitality and Fellowship Emphasis	Pulpit Ministry
Church I -FIC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church J -FIC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church A -FIC	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church C -FEM	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church L -FIC	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church D -FIC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church F -FIC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church K -FEM	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church B -FEM	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church G -FEM	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Church E -FBM	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Church H -FEM	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

FIC indicates a family-integrated church (all or most age-organized activities eliminated); FEM means family-equipping ministry (some age-organized activities retained but with complete reorientation of purpose). FBM indicates family-based ministry (intergenerational and parent-equipping activities added to current age-organized structures).



The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey

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"How can I find out what parents in my congregation are doing to disciple their children?" Early in my explorations of family ministry, I heard that question many times. Then, in dialogues with churches that were engaging effectively in family ministry, I discovered that the reassessments that had led to transformation in their ministries often started with a simple survey. Recognizing the need for a tool that could be used in a wide variety of congregations, I began to develop the Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey.

Initially, thirty-two items were drafted. An expert panel of six persons in the field of family ministry revised the items and approved the content validity of twenty items. Eight of these items—items 9 through 16 in the instrument's final form—gathered objective data related to the frequency of particular practices and experi-

ences. Twelve items had to do with parental perceptions. It was necessary to validate these items statistically.

The twelve items related to parental perceptions were first field-tested with a group of 117 parents in three evangelical congregations. Principle component factor analysis revealed that four items related weakly or negatively to the primary component; these four items were eliminated. The remaining eight items exhibited strong internal consistency reliability (Cronbach alpha coefficient, 0.88). Two research projects conducted with larger samples after the field test resulted in similarly strong coefficients, suggesting a stable and reliable instrument.

Items 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are reverse-scored. If adding items using a scale of 1 to 6 to analyze data from the surveys, reverse the order of the scale—so that it goes from 6 to 1 instead—on these items.

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THE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

This survey is intended for parents with children living at home.

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

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

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

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JFM Forum

Does Family Ministry Mean the End of Children's Ministry?

EDITED BY LAUREN FOSTER

Dr. Timothy Paul Jones was recently featured on a podcast at Ministry-to-Children.com in which he explained how the family-equipping discipleship model addresses important issues related to children's ministry. He was interviewed by Tony Kummer, founder and editor of Ministry-to-Children.com.

Tony Kummer: Let's talk about this whole issue of church and family connectedness in this process of discipleship. Why has this issue, all of a sudden, become something that church leaders are worried about?

Timothy Paul Jones: In the early stage of professionalizing youth and children's ministries in the 1950s through the early 1970s, churches chose people who could play well with kids. What happened in the 1980s and into the 1990s is that you start having theologically-trained youth and children's ministers. They were reflecting theologically on what they were doing. Suddenly, everybody seemed to realize that there was a problem with present practices of youth and children's ministry. Now, one of the things that concerns me is the idea that we need to start family ministry as a fix—as a cure-all for problems in the church.

T.K.: That brings up the question: "We want to implement family ministry and we see the value of it, but I've got only so many volunteers to do this program and half of my parents are just struggling to get here on Sunday morning, much less go home and lead family worship on Sunday afternoon. How does all this work?"

T.P.J.: Let's first establish the field of possibilities: On the one hand you've got people whom I respect greatly in what are called family-integrated churches; they're saying to wipe out everything age-graded. On the other side, we have the family-friendly approach or family-based ministry, which adds new programs to bring generations together. The third perspective, family-equipping ministry, steers a course between these two. What we are saying is not to add new programs but to take programs, activities, or events that you already have in place and then to conduct these programs in a

way that equips parents to engage spiritually with their children.

One of the ways that I try to explain family-equipping is in terms of the “T.I.E. test”: train, involve, and equip. Go through every event, activity, or program that you do with children or youth and ask, “How am I going to tweak this so that it trains parents, involves parents, or equips parents?” To *train* is to do something during that event that trains parents to do something at home that takes home what the kids got at that particular event. Inviting the parents is good but *involving* the parents means designing the event so that the parents must be there for the event to work—this also requires “families-in-faith” for those children whose parents are not part of the church. *Equipping* the parents means to give them some sort of tool so that they have a resource to take home and use in family devotions, to lead a discussion with their children, or to ask some questions about the works of God and what God is doing in their lives.

T.K.: My concern is that maybe this whole movement is about thirty years too late.

T.P.J.: Perhaps it is. But one thing that is actually encouraging to me is that this same thing happened before in the Middle Ages—there was a sharp drop-off in parents’ spiritual engagement with their children. Then, it was due to a drop in literacy, as well as a centralization of religious practices and church education in the church itself instead of being something that permeated the homes. What is encouraging to me is that, in the aftermath of the Reformation, practices of family discipleship, family worship, and parents engaging spiritually with their children arise anew; this persisted well into the Industrial Revolution. The church has gone through this before and there has been a semblance of recovery—so if recovery of these truths has happened before, it can happen again.

One of the things that is so crucial in all of this is that we return again and again to the gospel. Not to the church, not even to the family, but to the gospel. Our goal is Jesus Christ and our means of moving toward his grace and toward glory is through the gospel. Our educational programs in the church became so segmented, age-graded, split apart that, in some churches, there is

almost no intergenerational interaction. What we must do is to return to the gospel and to let it be central in what we do. That’s when our homes become places where day-by-day, week-by-week, we rehearse the gospel. This frees us from what can quickly become an idol in a family ministry emphasis: such a strong emphasis on the family that we begin to think our purpose is to have healthy families, to have families doing devotions, or to have families talking together about the things of God. Those are good practices but they are not the goal. Returning again and again to the gospel also helps us to recognize that part of the calling of family ministry is a calling to draw the orphans all around us into the family of God. Rather than simply aiming at having and helping healthy and whole families, we equip every family to become ministers and missionaries to the orphans around them, because this is at the heartbeat of the gospel itself.

I don’t disagree that we’re in some ways three decades too late with much of this. Yet I do see a rising tide of change. I recently did a survey with several hundred parents in dozens of churches. One of the things I found was that more than nine out of ten of these parents said, in essence, “I am responsible for my child’s spiritual formation; I want to talk to my child about the things of God.” But about eight out of ten of these suggested that no one in their churches was telling them *how*. A rising generation of parents is saying, “I know I need to do this, I want to do this.” What they’re waiting for is a church that equips them to be able to engage spiritually with their children, that shows them how to let their household become a gospel-rehearsing outpost in the world, and that equips them to enfold the spiritual orphans around them into a family, so that they too can experience the grace of God.



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minister of a small Southern Baptist church in Indiana. Tony was named by *Children’s Ministry* magazine as one of “20 to Watch” among emerging children’s ministry leaders. His website was named among the top five children’s ministry websites. He has contributed to *Children’s Ministry* magazine, Baptist Press, and the LifeWay Kids Ministry blog. He speaks at conferences and training events for ministry leaders. Together with his wife, he is busy bringing up five children.

Book Reviews

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR, LILLY PARK

***Family-Based Youth Ministry. Revised and Expanded Edition.* By Mark DeVries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004, 255 pp., \$16.00.**

When reading the new edition of *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (2004), by Mark DeVries, it is helpful to know ahead of time just what this book offers, and what it does not. DeVries has been involved in youth ministry for over twenty-five years: as an Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families, as founder of Youth Ministry Architects, and as a sought-after lecturer and teacher. All that to say, DeVries knows the subject of youth ministry well, and it is youth ministry that is a primary concern of this book.

DeVries spends the first few chapters diagnosing what he sees as the “crisis” in youth ministry: the way youth ministry has been done has not been “effective in leading our young people to mature Christian adulthood” (26). In short, DeVries believes much youth ministry leads kids away from taking responsibility for their own spiritual life (28) by isolating kids from mature Christian adults (39-43), with the result that young people are relationally, cognitively, and morally stunted (48-53). The corrective to this crisis is to re-establish the “generational threads that used to weave their way

into the fabric of growing up” by “connecting our kids to nurturing relationships that will last after they complete their teenage years” (56).

DeVries then spends the next few chapters discussing the positive and negative aspects of the nuclear family. DeVries certainly believes parents are crucial in the growth of young people toward Christ-likeness. He goes so far as to claim “Parents play a role second only to that of the Holy Spirit in building the spiritual foundation of their children’s lives” (68). Yet, he does not mince words in asserting that many Christian parents are just too spiritually immature, too harried by the busyness of life, or too affected by contemporary culture to navigate alone the task of raising their children toward being mature Christian adults (73-78).

It is here, then, that DeVries extols the benefits of what he sees is the key for growing children toward being “complete in Christ”: the extended family of the church (83-95, 116). Most significantly, DeVries believes that an extended Christian family can help to overcome deficiencies found in many homes—particularly non-traditional homes (119-29). DeVries also makes his case that an extended Christian family is essential for young people to mature in their faith by

providing avenues for them to own their faith (135-43) and to become responsible members of the larger Christian community of faith (146-56).

All of these benefits are good things. Yet, it is at this point in the book that an undercurrent of philosophy-of-ministry tension comes bursting to the surface. DeVries is clear in articulating this tension; it is found in the critical process of determining whether one is functioning in the context of a *family-ministry model* or a *youth-ministry model* (175). It is here that one also really gets a sense of what this book is *not* about.

Ultimately, this book is not about family-based youth ministry in the sense of equipping parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. Rather, this book is about extended-family-based youth ministry, in the sense of creating an environment where “the church takes the responsibility” of “moving students to maturity in Christ, accessing as much as possible the family and the extended family of the church” (175, emphasis added). As DeVries readily admits, this distinction is “subtle yet significant” (175).

The real value of this edition of *Family-Based Youth Ministry* is the same as the previous edition; it casts a vision for involving youth in the life of the church as members of a faith-family. Certainly, this volume adds to the conversation about the importance of family-based ministry. One gets the sense in reading this book that the conversation surrounding family-based ministry (youth and otherwise) has changed since it was originally published, and one is left to wonder whether DeVries’ work will speak as loudly in church-culture today, as it did in 1994.

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***Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus.* By Mark Yaconelli. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006, 256 pp., \$19.99.**

Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus is the result of research conducted by Mark Yaconelli, the creator and co-director of the Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project. From 2000 until 2003, he gathered a group of leaders from 13 exemplary

churches and 10 denominations in the United States. These churches ranged from conservative evangelical to liberal Protestants to Roman Catholic. He does not give a description of these churches and does not define “exemplary.” Leaders were trained to “explore a different way of sharing Jesus’ message of love with young people” (27). This book is his reflection on what happened in these churches.

Yaconelli has made several insightful observations about youth ministry with which we can agree. He tells youth leaders, “We cannot hope to touch the hearts of youth if we have lost our own spiritual rooting” (20). He identifies a key problem in most churches today when he declares we spend so much time “doing church” that we do not have time just to spend with God. His purpose in writing the book is summarized by this quote, “We have to give ourselves permission to pray, to listen to people, and to be humble and willing to wait on the Holy Spirit to lead the way. How can we share God if we’re too busy to be with God? How can we love kids if we aren’t present to them?” (21).

We do want our youth “to be with God” and to experience his presence. The methods in this book, however, are subjective, mystical, and lack the authority of the Word of God. One of Yaconelli’s main approaches is to have the youth listen as the leader reads a passage of Scripture several times. As the passage is read, they listen for a word or phrase that “shimmers” or “sticks,” and then share how they feel this applies to their life of faith. At this point, there is danger of the Bible becoming completely subjective and open to any idea. When Satan tempted Christ, he quoted Scripture but out of context. Christ responded with a hermeneutically correct, “It is written” (Matt 4:4). As followers of Christ, we are responsible not simply to respond to Scripture based on our feelings but to interpret the Word of God rightly (2 Tim 2:15).

The author relates how attending a retreat led by an Episcopal priest who emphasized silence, prayer, and imagination impacted his life. Many of these exercises, he claims, were part of an ancient and forgotten contemplative prayer tradition within the Christian church. When calling the church to change how we minister to youth, however, we must have a solid Scriptural founda-

tion—not just a few testimonies that tell how Ignatius Loyola would have done it.

The book references Christian Smith's landmark research in *Soul Searching*. This research clearly reveals parents as the most important influence in their adolescents' lives. Yet *Contemplative Youth Ministry* fails to mention the importance of parents in the life of youth. How does the contemplative method involve parents in the spiritual development of their children?

Yaconelli seems to believe that what youth need is to “find the God within them.” He appears to decry having either Scripture or church leaders as an authoritative voice in the lives of youth. They are simply to “experience Jesus” for themselves. He gives several examples in Scripture of people “experiencing Jesus,” but ignores the fact that most of the teaching of Jesus is drawn upon the authority of the Old Testament. Jesus told His disciples that they were foolish because they did not believe all that the prophets had spoken and then, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

Yaconelli implies that Christ would not come where the church gathers today but would be out where the people are. There is some truth in this. Yet the Bible also affirms that it was Jesus' custom to attend synagogue as well (Luke 14:6), and we must never forget that it is the church for whom Christ died. Yaconelli frequently says that Jesus expects nothing from us; while there is a measure of truth in this, Jesus says, “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14). In addition, the Great Commission describes his expectation for followers of Jesus.

The book appears to be pessimistic towards preaching or what he calls “word-heavy youth ministry.” Several times in the Gospels, however, we read that Jesus “preached” and Romans 10:14 asks how people can hear without a preacher. All of this seems rather “word-heavy.” The gospel must be proclaimed and reflected in the way we live. He is correct when he says we need to slow down, spend undisturbed time with God, and commune with him. In authentic communion with God, however, the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to transform our inner being so that we desire to

serve him in the world to the glory of our Savior.

Brian C. Richardson, Ph.D.

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***When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America.* By Mark Senter III. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010, 363 pp., \$26.99.**

When God Shows Up, A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America by Mark Senter III is an appealing read that shows how youth ministry developed in America from the early nineteenth century through the first decade of the twenty-first century. The book provides an excellent overview of the movement and is written in an engaging style. Senter uses the metaphor of “jazz” to propose that Protestant youth have often improvised their styles of ministry. Like jazz, he says, youth ministry “has proven to endure, has distinctive structures, has fit into the culture of the day, and has attracted an outstanding cast of leaders” (2). He uses this structure to present the history of youth ministry. He argues that youth ministry practices go through fifty-year cycles of rise and decline; he then presents four such cycles, from the antebellum period through the late twentieth century.

A book of this size cannot cover everything, and there are gaps in the history of youth ministry that the author acknowledges are not covered. Many African-American congregations taught their youth to be involved and to lead. Their involvement included both spiritual and political components. This important aspect of the history of youth ministry needs to be developed further. Another gap is in the impact of women such as Mrs. Marshall Roberts and Lucretia Boyd on young women. Camps are also a major part of youth ministry history. Attending a Youth for Christ summer camp conference with thousands of other teens in the mid-1950s, I saw firsthand the impact that program had on youth.

Many of the major statements in the book are unsupported by cited sources. The author appears to want the reader to accept his conclusions and interpretation of the events concerning the movement—but occasionally he does not cite sufficient sources for the reader to

weigh the historical evidences. A few examples are as follows:

- The claim is made that the youth rallies led by Percy Crawford and Jack Wyrzten were made up of about fifty percent adults. No source is mentioned for this claim, and having personally attended some of these rallies in the mid-fifties this was not my experience.
- Senter says that Jack Wyrzten did not attend an organizational meeting for Youth for Christ held in Winona Lake, Indiana in 1945 because he “distrusted structures other than his own” (265). This may be true, but where does this information come from? And how do we know that this was Wyrzten’s reason for not attending?
- It is claimed that the response of the Son City rallies were “far more effective than Youth for Christ rallies had been” (269). Again, no proof is cited.
- Senter suggests that Southern Baptists did not widely employ youth ministers until the 1970s (208). Having served two Southern Baptist churches as a minister of youth in the 1960s and having been part of a Southern Baptist organization of youth ministers with more than one hundred members during that time, I must question that claim.

The epilogue includes a section titled “So Where Do We Go from Here?” Senter asks ten questions that grew out of his research into the history of youth ministry. He is concerned that we avoid the mistakes of the past. Here is a sample: “Youth ministry in America totally misses close to three-quarters of the adolescent population in America. How will Protestant youth ministry change to meet that challenge?” (312)

These questions are important to consider as we look to the past to inform the future. The one question I do not understand is number 10: “Where does youth ministry find its theological grounding?” (313). No matter how much youth ministry must change, the theological foundation must always be the Word of God. Despite these concerns, this book provides an important and engaging contribution to our understanding of Protestant youth ministry in America and a guide for the future.

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***Youth Ministry 3.0: A Manifesto.* By Mark Oestreicher. El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2008, 155 pp., \$12.99.**

The premise for Mark Oestreicher’s book, *Youth Ministry 3.0*, is that youth workers need to change (19). Oestreicher introduces the problem by referencing recent studies, which found that teens were leaving the church shortly after high school (24). By mentioning these studies and not further developing a need for the gospel, one is left with an unspoken implication that youth ministry is about head count.

Although Oestreicher made numerous unsubstantiated claims about the early stages of the youth ministry movement (45, 47, 48, 50), his reliance on scholars such as Mark Senter, Jon Savage, and Kenda Dean enables him to present a very brief yet accurate depiction of the rise and reason for youth ministry. This depiction would have been strengthened by the use of primary sources and by citing some of the bolder claims he propositioned. The historical synopsis provided a single side of the double-sided coin of youth ministry.

Oestreicher describes the 1970s as an epochal shift in how we do youth ministry (54). He credits Youth Specialties’ founders Mike Yaconelli and Wayne Rice with much of the work that promulgated this shift. It is interesting to note that Wayne Rice has recently released books entitled *Generation to Generation* and *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again)* in which Rice places the role and function of parents at the top of the priority list—a stark contrast to Oestreicher’s position and to the early days of Youth Specialties. Oestreicher gives the topic of parents less than a page of text and even less credibility (107). Oestreicher states that as much as parents are important, he is writing of something “larger and broader” (107). He claims that most family-based ministries have done nothing else than add programs (107), yet Oestreicher’s proposition is no different. He encourages his readers to do more for youth (94-95, 110) while at the same time suggesting programs to be cut (97).

Oestreicher’s theological foundations are quite con-

fusing at times. He claims that the experience of teenagers is what links them to God (102) and seems not to recognize that faith comes through hearing, not experience (Rom 10:17). Oestreicher admits that the experiences will come and go depending on the youth culture (88), but never mentions the one thing that is constant in all people's lives—the gospel.

Amidst the confusing theology, one of the most unfortunate aspects of the text was the manner in which Oestreicher presented the motivation for change. Oestreicher did not turn to Scripture, but instead presented a model he gleaned from what he himself calls a new-age business book (109). It is this model he encourages his readers to adopt in regards to the movement from where they are to where they need to be. It is this model that Kenda Dean suggests the reader to “baptize” in order to promote effective change (13).

Oestreicher does point out that we need to first identify the heart of God and where God is already at work, and then join with the work already in progress (75). Oestreicher hits the nail on the head when he says that youth culture has splintered (88). Yet instead of trying to fix the splinter by developing youth ministry practices that are rooted in the gospel and in Scripture, Oestreicher suggests our approaches need to splinter more (88). It is difficult to see how such an approach can truly reflect God's design for his church.

Ryan Steenburg, Ph.D.

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Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

***Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth.* By Doug Fields. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998, 395 pp., \$17.99.**

Doug Fields has been the Pastor to Students at Saddleback Church in Southern California since 1992. Early in his book, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, Fields identifies his goal for the book is to coach the reader “through a plan to build a healthy youth ministry that isn't dependent on one great youth worker and won't be destroyed when that person leaves” (17). Fields proceeds to describe the model that Saddleback has established and utilized for a number of years. Although Fields states that the goal is not to direct programs but

to disciple students (18), he admits that purpose-driven youth ministry will have programs and structures which reflect the program's purposes (17).

The first step, according to Fields, is to develop and communicate a purpose statement for the youth ministry (55-57). Fields suggests a clear purpose statement will assist the leader in making sense of the program, utilizing volunteers, and providing direction for the student's spiritual maturity (56). He also adds that a purpose statement will attract followers (57). Following the purpose statement is the process of identifying the audience (87). Saddleback has designed a circular system to identify those individuals who are least committed to those who are most committed in the church (87). Fields has adjusted the circular diagram into a funnel in order to demonstrate that with the purpose-driven system, some students will drop out rather than move to the next level of commitment (92). My concern with this system and diagram is that instead of expecting all the students to deepen their relationship with Christ, there is an assumption that some supposed believers will drop out, while others move to the next level. Fields states that he has never experienced any opposition from the students to the circle of commitment (or funnel system) (93). Could this be because those who oppose the system have simply dropped out as predicted?

It is unfortunate that Fields feels compelled rather than excited to write a chapter on the subject of teaming with parents (252). Fields concludes that the early years of youth ministry did not see parents or the home as significant (252). This is historically inaccurate. Individuals including Samuel Dike, Henry Cope, and others actively sought to include the parents and the home in the process of youth discipleship. Thankfully, Fields admits that “our role in a student's spiritual development is helpful, but a parent's role is crucial” (254).

Many good ideas can be gleaned from Fields' suggestions and experience. Two components seem to be missing in his approach: (1) centeredness in the gospel, and (2) equipping of parents to sustain the spiritual development of the youth. Instead of developing a funnel where we sacrifice some for the sake of others, could the youth minister not develop a tunnel where every believer is expected to enter and to continue toward maturity in Christ?

W. Ryan Steenburg, Ph.D.

Director of Administration and Development
Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

***Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church.* By Mark H. Senter III, Wesley Black, Chap Clark, and Malan Nel. Kindle edition; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001, 192 pp., \$17.99.**

In his introductory chapter, Mark Senter sets the backdrop in an attempt to frame the debate covered in the rest of the book. He does this by addressing fundamental questions involving ecclesiology, missiology, and anthropology. Senter maintains that local churches have adopted a parachurch character. He holds that this is in large part due to the seeker-sensitive and purpose-driven ministry strategies that are designed to evangelize adolescents. There can be no adequate discussion of youth ministry and its purpose without handling the issue of development, both physically and spiritually. Anthropologically, Senter discusses age appropriateness and spiritual awareness.

Inclusive-Congregational: Malan Nel, professor of youth ministry and Christian education in South Africa, sounds the timely call for churches to design a comprehensive approach that enmeshes youth in the larger congregation of believers. He accurately reports that historically the church and youth work have typically been autonomous. Nel is correct that the fragmentation of local congregations has weakened the overall discipleship process and has certainly affected adolescents in those congregations. The church must see adolescents as a part of the church now. Yet what Nel misses is the need to address adolescents culturally, and more specifically missiologically. Ultimately, what Nel proposes has been most recently observed in the family-integrated church movement in the last decade. This view seems to downplay adolescent developmental structures by swinging the discipleship pendulum to the opposite extreme, as noted in Wes Black's response. In the end, can this model accurately be classified as youth ministry?

Preparatory: Wes Black of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary lays out a model that reclaims a more familiar understanding of local church youth ministry. The strength of Black's proposed preparatory

model is its focus on equipping adolescents for "the work of the ministry" both now and later. While the preparatory approach is intentionally separated from other segments of the congregation, it is intended to leverage the developmental strengths of adolescence. Black defines youth ministry as "everything a church does with, to, and for teenagers that builds them into becoming the church" (location 43). This approach demonstrates a firm commitment to the command of Ephesians 4:12. One additional strength of the preparatory approach is Black's use of the laboratory metaphor that views local church youth ministry as the training ground for future church leadership.

Missional: The missional approach proposed by Chap Clark of Fuller Seminary does not seem to be appreciably different from the preparatory approach. It is most assuredly an inside-out strategy that is focused (like the preparatory approach) on equipping adolescents to be sent as missionaries to their peers and beyond. This approach seems to downplay the teaching dimension but must be evaluated on the strength of sending out adolescents to carry the message of the Gospel.

Strategic: Mark Senter's strategic approach goes off the beaten path to stretch youth ministry in areas not often considered. In brief, he proposes youth ministry as church planting. What Senter describes is something supported by but disconnected from a local church. He calls youth ministers to leverage the leadership that they develop in their youth ministries to launch new churches. At present, North American church planting is replete with examples of youth ministers launching out to plant local church congregations and seeing many of their students join them, though this is not precisely what Senter proposes. Responses to Senter are consistent in cautioning youth ministers who might embrace such an approach. It undermines the family and is essentially unrealistic. It seems as though this approach may have been created solely for the sake of having a fourth view. That being said, it is right and good for churches to involve adolescents and their families in church planting.

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again): From Bells & Whistles to Flesh and Blood.* By Wayne Rice. Kindle edition; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010, 207 pp., \$17.00.**

Over the past several years, local church youth ministry has come under fire. These critiques have questioned the validity and effectiveness of local church youth ministry and sometimes the very existence of youth ministers. In response, Wayne Rice declares “Youth ministry may not be perfect and may have a long way to go, but God didn’t make a mistake by calling the quarter-million-plus adults who are serving in church youth ministries right now” (location 57). Rice offers an insider’s look and recommendations for churches as he calls youth ministry leaders to step back and to evaluate the current landscape of their ministries. Although he spent a substantial number of years as leader of a parachurch youth ministry organization, Rice has much to offer local church youth ministers, springing from his commitment to the local church. His love for the church is obvious and contagious.

Rice writes narratively but offers adequate references to primary sources in support of his insights. As he unfolds his personal journey with Youth Specialties, his insights should evoke careful thought about current practices in local church youth ministry with a view to future effectiveness.

Rice introduces the need for reinvention by calling attention to the primacy of parents in their teenager’s discipleship. “Reinvented youth ministry ... has to begin by taking parents and families seriously” (1699). The Bible offers substantial admonishment for leaders to raise the level of priority in the area of family ministry. Rice does not provide an extensive handling of those biblical texts but he provides enough to establish that “the church and family are the most powerful and important institutions on the earth” (1720). Rice has a passion not only for partnership with parents but also for bonding teenagers to the multigenerational congregation of believers: “When youth groups function as alternatives to the church rather than a vital part of it, teenagers don’t experience what the church has to offer them” (1453). This is both consistent and accurate with the guidelines of Scripture. It affirms that local

church youth ministry must be evaluated both in terms of building up families and in terms of building up the body of Christ.

As Rice deals with the priority of family in youth ministry, he reaffirms the need for youth ministers in the local church. He does not propose eradication of youth ministry strategies that include regular or seasonal activities for teenagers. He does however confront program-driven ideologies when he states that “the calling of youth pastor should carry with it an implied shepherding role that is much bigger than keeping a youth ministry program up and running” (1263).

The punch line of this book is rightly reserved for the final chapter where Rice asks the simple question, “Where is youth ministry headed now?” (1645). He suggests practical measures that will promote a youth and family ministry priority. As Rice turns the corner from narrative description to practical prescription, he seems to focus less on evangelism. This does not diminish the value of his suggestions, but it does call for a somewhat more comprehensive model of youth and family evangelism.

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Equipping the Next Generation: The Ascetic Character of Fatherhood

PETER R. SCHEMM, JR.

I don't always do what is right as a father. I often miss opportunities to do what is right and best for my family. I tend, like most dads, to want what is best for me. That's why I was so interested in what I read recently about the nature of leadership. It comes from an unlikely place, the memoir of a theologian.



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This particular insight about leadership concerns those who hold offices of power and authority in the academy. In this context, theologian Stanley Hauerwas observed: "People who occupy such offices cannot let their likes and dislikes of this or that person shape the decisions they must make for the good of the whole. *The ascetic character of the rightful exercise of power is seldom appreciated.*"¹ When I read that last sentence, I paused. "I like where he is going with this but I want to tweak it a bit by swapping 'power' for 'leadership' or some other less potent word." Then I realized that, as with many Hauerwasian statements, this is well written. To remove "power" from the state-

ment neuters the statement. His thought concerns the rightful exercise of power, not the rightful exercise of something less. "Ascetic" points here to the practice of strict self-denial for the purpose of spiritual formation.

Since I consider the vocation of fatherhood an office of power, I began to think about leadership and fatherhood in that context. Here "power" refers to the good, God-given authority and ability to influence the most basic of all societal institutions, the family. I want to steward well the power God has entrusted to me to lead my home. Yet I am also quite sure that I don't know how to do this well. My tendencies are toward the wrongful exercise of power. Power is so easily misused.

God has entrusted to fathers the power to procreate, to make provision, and to lead. They are to do so in ways that display the gospel, in sacrificial and self-denying ways (Eph 5:25-6:4)—in ascetic ways. Some evangelicals have used the language of "servant-leader" to try to convey the sacrificial nature of Christian leadership but I am not sure that has always been the best term. The term servant-leader seems worn out and misunderstood. When evangelicals today use the language of servant-leader, it often does not convey an ascetic sense of leadership. Moreover, the phrase is sometimes used in a way that does not convey leadership at all. It sounds more

like “servant” than “leader,” so much so that it seems to be a nice way of asking for permission to lead. If the use of “servant-leader” is a nice way to get permission to lead, then I prefer avoiding that language.

Scripture casts a vision for a particular kind of leadership, yes, but it is indeed leadership. Perhaps what we are looking for is something more like what Hauerwas has called “the ascetic character” of a leader. If our Lord Jesus was anything, he was an ascetic leader.

To avoid further capitulating to a wrongful idea of servant, consider the paradox of power in the kingdom of God. A true servant in the kingdom is not powerless, but powerful. Think of Joseph as servant in Egypt, of the Hebrew prophets as servants to Israel, and the One who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. If our Lord Jesus was anything, he was a powerful servant.

Hauerwas’s idea of the ascetic character of a leader fits fatherhood well. I am suggesting that fathers actively engage in the strict denial of their own desires and tendencies in order to form the Christian home. An ascetic leader is one who practices self-denial on a routine basis, intentionally and relentlessly. That type of character is crucial to the rightful exercise of power in the Christian home.

What routines of self denial, if any, characterize your expression of Christian fatherhood? And, do you see the gospel as operative in those routines?

Instead of getting frustrated with our wives and children when they slow down pursuit of our agendas, we learn to practice self-denial. That is, we don’t just pray for patience when we are interrupted. We actively work to mortify our flesh in the context of our duties as fathers.² We work to serve our families as an expression of the gospel. We learn to look for and to anticipate moments of denial. Mediating yet another sibling dispute, taking inconvenient phone calls during the work day, and changing our Saturday plans for the sake of another—all of these are moments of denial that we ought to anticipate. It is our responsibility as fathers to pursue the ascetic character of leadership in the home.

Many of us have not seen the ascetic character of fatherhood up close. And even those of us who had godly, selfless dads may not have had the eyes to see it

at the time. In any case, no matter what our experience has been with our earthly fathers, the gospel allows no excuses from our past.

Through the gospel we can follow the compelling examples of the patriarchs in Scripture. Inasmuch as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were men of faith, we may assume they were also men of self-denial. We have one particularly significant example in Abraham, who, when he was tested by God, willingly offered up his son of promise as an act of faith (Heb 11:17). I consider this an act of self-denial because in a very real sense he was giving himself away—this was his “only son,” the one whom he loved dearly (Gen 22:2). This was at once an act of self-denial and an act of faith by the father of many nations.

Our most compelling example of the ascetic character of fatherhood is, of course, God our Father. He chose to give himself to us and for us through Jesus Christ, his one and only Son. The selflessness of his gift is seen in the fact that he made his Son who knew no sin to become sin for us so that God’s righteousness would be available to us. Again, he poured out his perfect and holy wrath on his own Son as an act of triune selflessness in order to accomplish the gospel. He is the perfectly ascetic Father, the One who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.

It should be the lifelong pursuit of all earthly fathers to imitate God the Father. I hope to do that more faithfully in my home. I want to mediate fatherhood in a way that attracts my wife and children to the gospel—and to the great architect of the gospel, God the Father, the one from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (Eph 3:14–15).

ENDNOTES

¹Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah’s Child: A Theologian’s Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 231; emphasis mine.

²The context of fatherhood, it seems to me, is one of the most important places to seek to work out the doctrine of mortification. For a valuable resource in our fight against sin, see the classic by John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2004).



The Glory of Bench Warming: Fathers, Sons, Playing Time, and Leadership

DAVID PRINCE.

Something great happened this past basketball season for one of my sons.

He sat the bench.

You may be thinking that such news sounds more like a cause for depression than celebration—and at the beginning of the season, my middle-

school son would have agreed with you. The truth is, I do not want him to want to sit the bench. I want him to try with every ounce of his ability to earn a starting position. Yet I also want him to know how to be a leader even when he finds himself sitting on the bench despite his best efforts.

In most sports leagues prior to middle school, the focus had been teaching the fundamentals of the game and giving everyone an opportunity to play. This philosophy, coupled with the fact that my son was consistently one of the better players on past teams, meant that he rarely spent much time on the bench. But in sports, as with other areas of life,

greater age brings greater responsibility and accountability—and a strong dose of maturing reality. On athletic teams this means, appropriately, a transition from playing time being given to playing time being earned. It also means recognizing that God has gifted some people with superior athletic abilities.

My son was excited when team tryouts were announced. He made the team, practices began, and the team moved toward the start of the season. We decided he would get up before school in the morning and run two miles on the treadmill to increase his stamina. Yet when the team began playing games, he rarely got off the bench and I began to notice his demeanor. He seemed disinterested and chatty. He was only engaged and focused when he was in the game. On the floor, he was loud and fiery. When he was on the bench, which was most of the time, he rarely left his seat and his posture was relaxed and slouching.

I heard one parent say about their son in a similar situation, “Well, what do you expect when he is sitting the bench? You have to feel sorry for him working so hard and not getting to play.”

I didn’t understand that mentality. I was pleased that my son was on the bench. It provided him with



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the opportunity to learn what his father expects when his son finds himself on the bench. It's actually the same thing I expect of him when he is a starter: that he be a leader who uses every ounce of his ability and effort to glorify Jesus. I did not feel one bit sorry for him working so hard and not getting to play. The truth is, my son needed to be a role player on that team; and the truth is, most of us end up being role players in life, not stars or starters.

One day after a game I asked my son, "Why aren't you being a leader on your team?" He glanced up at me with a perplexed expression that seemed to indicate wonder at whether I had seen him sitting the bench. From that point, my son and I developed a strategy for leading from the bench. We sought to answer some questions. How can you sit on the bench in a way that says, "I am as committed to the success of the team here as I would be if I were shooting free throws with the game on the line? How can you sit the bench and positively affect the other players on the bench and the players in the game? How can you sit the bench in a way that honors your coach?"

Developing our plan began with honest evaluation. I told him, "On this team you are not very talented and do not deserve to play very much right now. And that is okay; you can figure out your role and do everything you can to help the team be the best it can be—which is what each player should do anyway." I was pleased to see that my son responded well to this honest call to courage and self-sacrifice. The reminder that the team as a whole is more important than any one player and that my son should fulfill his role for the good of the team even if it was not glamorous—those truths triumphed over the selfish individualism that had reared its ugly head early in the season. He was learning about far more than basketball at that point. My son was learning a lesson about human pride, grace, temptation, and the wiles of the evil one (James 4:6-7).

Below I've outlined the game plan that my son and I created. Perhaps you'll have a son who will someday be sitting the bench—or perhaps he already is. If so, great! Seize the opportunity for the glory of Christ. If you prop up the notion that your son's desires are more important than the good of the team, do not be sur-

prised when he someday concludes that his desires are more important than the good of his family, his church, and everything else too.

- Make sure your posture communicates that you are engaged. Sit on the edge of your seat.
- Be the loudest player on the bench cheering for your team.
- Leap from your seat every time your team scores or gets a turnover.
- Get out of your seat during timeouts; go out on the court and greet the players who are in the game.
- Talk only about the game to your teammates on the bench.
- Listen to everything your coach says when he speaks, looking him in the eye.
- Be the first one to volunteer if your coach needs something done.
- Thank the referees after every game.
- When you do get into the game, remember that you may not be the most talented player out there, but you can be the toughest player: dive for every loose ball, play tough, and never get out-hustled.
- Make the more talented players better by being tough on them in practice: challenge them and make them fight for everything they get.

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The Journal of Family Ministry Style Guide

PURPOSE OF THE JOURNAL OF FAMILY MINISTRY

The Journal of Family Ministry is a semi-annual publication of the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The purpose of *The Journal of Family Ministry* is to provide a forum for the discussion and development of biblically-driven and theologically-grounded practices of multigenerational family ministry in local churches.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. All articles submitted for publication are expected to conform to the requirements set forth in this Style Guide. Please submit your manuscript in what you consider to be the final form. Only one article may be submitted at a time.

Feature articles should be original, scholarly contributions to the field of family ministry. Most articles will be approximately 7500 words but not exceeding 10,000 words.

Research briefs should be approximately 1,000 or fewer words and should summarize the church ministry implications a recent dissertation or research project in the field of family ministry, adult ministry, parent min-

istry, youth ministry, children's ministry, counseling, or family relationships.

Book reviews should be 1,000 or fewer words in length.

Articles for Equipping the Generations should be fewer than 2,500 words and should present a practical idea or vision for some aspect of family ministry.

1.2. Articles that have appeared elsewhere or are to appear elsewhere should not be submitted.

1.3. Please consult Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) for proper stylistic format. On items for which Turabian does not specify proper style, please consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed., rev. and exp. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: G & C Merriam, 1967). For field-specific stylistic formatting not specified in the above resources or in this guide, please consult Patrick Alexander, et al., eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).

1.4. Once an article has been accepted for publication,

the author will be notified and may be asked to make appropriate revisions pertaining to style and/or substance as suggested by the editor and is to provide the editor with his or her final submission in electronic format. Whenever deemed necessary, the editors may also make changes to articles for the sake of clarity or conformity to institutional beliefs or policies. Please note that accepted articles must be submitted in the latest version of Microsoft Word and all Hebrew and/or Greek fonts must be transliterated.

1.5. Please submit via email a brief biography and a high-resolution photograph of yourself with your article to the managing editor at djbrown@sbts.edu.

1.6. Articles for the spring/summer installment of the Journal must be submitted by January 1. Articles for the fall/winter installment must be submitted by June 1.

FORM OF THE MANUSCRIPT

2.1. The title of the article should appear on the first page of the manuscript, centered. Each major word should be capitalized.

2.2. Please submit an electronic copy of your article to the managing editor at djbrown@sbts.edu.

2.3. Double-space your article, including endnotes and indented quotations. Neither footnotes nor parenthetical references are to be used. Please use endnotes for all citations.

2.4. Italic type is to be used for foreign words, transliterations, and titles of books and periodicals. Italics for emphasis are to be avoided.

2.5. Use 12-point, Times New Roman font.

2.6. Headings and subheadings: Main headings are emboldened, have a 12 point font, and are not indented; subheadings are emboldened, italicized, have a 12 point font, and are not indented. If a an additional level of subheading is required, it should be italicized, have 12 point font, and not be indented.

2.7. Overcapitalization is to be avoided. Do not capitalize the following words: apostle, biblical, book (e.g. “book of Acts”), covenant (e.g. new covenant), creation, cross, epistle (except when part of title), exodus (except for the book of Exodus), evangelical, (the) fall, heaven, hell, incarnation, kingdom, rapture, scriptural, and references to deity by way of personal pronouns

(“he” or “his” rather than “He” or “His”). Always capitalize Bible, Scripture, all words beginning with Christ-, Church when referring to the universal Church, Pentecostal, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Synoptics, Synoptic Gospels. The “gospel” is the good news of salvation in Christ; the “Gospels” are the written documents (e.g., Gospel of John). Write “the Lord’s prayer,” “the Lord’s supper,” and “Sermon on the Mount.”

2.8. Use contractions sparingly.

2.9. Distinguish between hyphens (e.g., first-century author), en dashes (e.g., John 1:1–18; 1960–1970), and em dashes (e.g., “Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will,” Rom 1:18—2:4). Note that there is no space on either side of a hyphen (-), en dash (–), or em dash (—).

QUOTATIONS

3.1. Quotations of four or more lines of text should be presented as block quotations.

3.2. Respect for accuracy in verbatim quotations requires that the spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviations of the original be reproduced exactly. If the quotation contains an error, this may be indicated by [sic] or [?].

3.3. Put commas and periods inside quotation marks; put colons, semicolons, dashes, and parentheses outside quotation marks.

3.4. Any copyright infringement (whether by error or by design), including any consequences thereof, shall be considered the sole responsibility and burden of the author.

CITATIONS OF BIBLICAL TEXTS

4.1. Titles of biblical books are not to be italicized. The abbreviations for the books (given below) are to be used (without punctuation), but only when chapter and verse references follow. Example: Gen 1:2; Exod 3:4, 6, 8; 13:9–14:4; but “in Romans 8 one reads . . .”

4.2. Arabic numerals alone are to be used in Scripture references, not roman numerals. Example: 1 Kings 5; 2 Tim 2:1; rather than I Kings 5 or II Tim 2:1.

4.3. Use the English Standard Version (ESV) or the New American Standard Bible (NASB) for biblical quota-

tions. The Living Bible, the Message, NRSV, TNIV, and NIV (2011) are to be avoided.

4.4. The following abbreviations should be used for biblical books:

Old Testament

Genesis	Gen	Proverbs	Prov
Exodus	Exod	Ecclesiastes	Eccl
Leviticus	Lev	Song of Solomon	Song
Numbers	Num	Isaiah	Isa
Deuteronomy	Deut	Jeremiah	Jer
Joshua	Joshua	Lamentations	Lam
Judges	Judges	Ezekiel	Ezek
Ruth	Ruth	Daniel	Dan
1 Samuel	1 Sam	Hosea	Hos
2 Samuel	2 Sam	Joel	Joel
1 Kings	1 Kgs	Amos	Amos
2 Kings	2 Kgs	Obadiah	Obed
1 Chronicles	1 Chron	Jonah	Jonah
2 Chronicles	2 Chron	Micah	Mic
Ezra	Ezra	Nahum	Nah
Nehemiah	Neh	Habakkuk	Hab
Esther	Esth	Zephaniah	Zeph
Job	Job	Haggai	Hag
Psalms	Ps (Pss)	Zechariah	Zech
Malachi	Mal		

New Testament

Matthew	Matt	Romans	Rom
Mark	Mark	1 Corinthians	1 Cor
Luke	Luke	2 Corinthians	2 Cor
John	John	Galatians	Gal
Acts	Acts	Ephesians	Eph
Philippians	Phil	James	James
Colossians	Col	1 Peter	1 Pet
1 Thessalonians	1 Thess	2 Peter	2 Pet
2 Thessalonians	2 Thess	1 John	1 John
1 Timothy	1 Tim	2 John	2 John
2 Timothy	2 Tim	3 John	3 John
Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Philemon	Philem	Revelation	Rev
Hebrews	Heb		

ENDNOTES

5.1. Endnotes should be numbered consecutively, double-spaced, and gathered together at the end of the article. Example:

John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006),189.

5.2. A raised Arabic numeral (without punctuation or parentheses) should follow the appropriate word in the text (and its punctuation, if any) to call attention to the note. Insofar as is possible, endnotes should occur at the end of the sentence. There is to be no space between the text and an endnote number.

5.3. In endnote citations, we do not include the words “Press,” “Books,” “Book House,” etc. unless it is a university press or scholar’s press. Example: “Cambridge University Press,” on the one hand, but “Crossway” or “Baker,” on the other.

SUBMISSIONS

The Journal of Family Ministry: Equipping the Generations for Gospel-Centered Living is a peer-reviewed professional and academic journal. The editors and the editorial board welcome letters, suggestions, and articles from readers. Article submissions should conform to the *Journal of Biblical Literature* stylistic guidelines. The editorial philosophy will be consistent with *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) and with Southern Seminary's *Abstract of Principles* (1858).

Fall/Winter 2011

Theme: A Theology of Adoption

Spring/Summer 2012

Theme: Family Ministry and Motherhood

Fall/Winter 2012

Theme: Family Relationships and Responsibilities in the Patristic Era

Spring/Summer 2013

Theme: Intergenerational Relationships in the Community of Faith

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