

Grace Baptist Chapel's View of Family Ministry

We seek to be a congregation that focuses on connecting the church's ministry and the family. We believe that the primary discipleship outlet for children is parents. However, the church is a partner in the discipleship process. We seek to design our body life to assist the family units within the church towards discipleship. While we do occasionally have age-graded activities, we also value the entire family having the opportunity to worship, serve and grow together. We value a multi-generational approach to ministry. An existing model of this is the 'Family-Equipping Model' (described below)

Description taken from <http://www.sbts.edu/family/blog/the-family-equipping-model-for-family-ministrytransforming-age-organized-ministries-to-co-champion-the-family-and-the-community-of-faith/>

In many ways the family-equipping model represents a middle route between the family-integrated and family-based models (2). Semblances of age-organized ministry remain intact in family-equipping contexts. Many family-equipping churches even retain youth ministers and children's ministers. Yet every practice at every level of ministry is reworked to champion the place of parents as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives. Because parents are primary disciple-makers and vital partners in family-equipping ministry, every activity for children or youth must resource, train, or directly involve parents (3).

Whereas family-based churches develop intergenerational activities within existing segmentedprogrammatic structures and add family activities to current calendars, family-equipping churches redevelops the congregation's structure to cultivate a renewed culture wherein parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the primary faith-trainers in their children's lives. As in family-integrated churches, children whose parents are unbelievers are connected with mature believers in the types of relationships that Paul described in his letter to Titus (Titus 2:1-8). Every level of the congregation's life is consciously recultured to "co-champion" the church's ministry and the parent's responsibility.

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To envision the family-equipping model in action, imagine a river with large stones jutting through the surface of the water. The river represents the Christian growth and development of children in the church. One riverbank signifies the church, and the other riverbank connotes the family. Both banks are necessary for the river to flow forward with focus and power. Unless both riverbanks support the child's development, you are likely to end up with the destructive power of a deluge instead of the constructive possibilities of a river. The stones that guide and redirect the river currents represent milestones or rites of passage that mark the passing of key points of development that the church and families celebrate together.

- (1) For the model as practiced by these ministers, see Jay Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry: Co-champions with a Single Goal," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B&H, 2009); Brian Haynes, *Shift: What it Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2009); Steve Wright with Chris Graves, *reThink: Is Student Ministry Working?* (Raleigh: InQuest, 2007).
- (2) Much that is found in *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs: Cook, 2009) fits in the overlap between the family-based and family-equipping paradigms, at least from an organizational and programmatic perspective; many of the associated publications may be helpful in resourcing the development of family-based and family-equipping ministries. The content and approach of materials from The reThink Group seem in many cases to be driven more by ecclesial pragmatism than by substantive theological or biblical considerations.
- (3) For the "resource, train, involve" principle as well as the term "co-champion," see Steve Wright with Chris Graves, *reThink: Is Student Ministry Working?* (Raleigh: InQuest, 2007).

Editor's Note: This article was adapted from the book *Trained in the Fear of God*, edited by Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones.