



## ENGAGING PARENTS IN SPIRITUAL NURTURE

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A defining moment in my children's ministry happened through a simple comment made by a child one Sunday morning. The previous week I had taught a lesson to the children on recognizing the subtle influence of evil in our world. I had given them several examples of activities and media that would be good to avoid. The very next week, one little boy reported back to me on his activities. When describing one event, his sister added, "I told my mom you said that wasn't a good idea, but she let him do it anyway!" It became very clear to me in that moment that teaching the children would have little impact if I could not also influence their parents.

Children are at church a few hours a week, but they are under their parents' guidance on a day-to-day basis. If it is the church's desire to see this generation of children fall in love with Jesus and live a changed life through the power of the Holy Spirit, then the best way to accomplish this goal is to strengthen the parents who are on the front lines of raising this generation.

Scripture is very clear that the responsibility to spiritually nurture children rests with parents.

*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*  
(Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV)

Many Christian parents desire to fulfill that command, but they feel inadequate and scared! Churches are in the unique position to partner with parents in their desire to raise godly children. We can do this through providing training and resources; sharing information between home and church, and helping parents to become spiritually involved with their children.

### Training

- While children are in children's ministry, provide classes for parents. Share ideas and activities about how they can pass on their faith to their children. Give everyone a specific activity to accomplish with their children during the week and then hold each other accountable for completing the task.

- Work with parents to create a yearly spiritual goals plan. This could include Bible verses to learn, service activities to complete as a family, Bible characters to study, character traits to develop, and family fun nights with a Bible theme. Again, hold each other accountable at regular intervals throughout the year. Families who are intentional and have a plan are more likely to raise godly children!

#### Resources

- Regularly provide parents with articles, websites, books, and activities to help them pass on their faith to their children.
- Send out a survey asking parents how you can help them meet the spiritual needs of their children. Set aside a time when you get together and talk about the results.
- On Mother's Day, Father's Day, Back-to-School Sunday, etc. give parents a gift that can help them pass on faith at home such as a book, CD, DVD, etc.

#### Information Sharing

- Provide parents with information about what their children and youth are learning in church.
- Senior Pastors, preach the message of raising godly kids from the pulpit!
- Youth and Children's Pastors, model the message in your ministries.
- Include sermon discussion points for families every Sunday in the bulletin.
- At the end of adult Bible classes, give parents five minutes to discuss how they can share what they have learned with their children.
- Ask children's workers to connect with parents weekly through e-mail, facebook, or phone.
- Have parents pick up their children from ministry sessions. Share what the children studied.

#### Involvement

- Set-up mentoring relationships for single parents with older parents in the congregation.
- Provide family activities throughout the year. These events should encourage communication, activity, and fun within the family.
- Consider having intergenerational services. You need to actively plan to integrate the children into the service- not just cancel children's classes and have them join adults.
- Ask parents to attend Sunday school, Children's Church, Midweek clubs, or a Youth service or activity with their children at least once a year.

As churches and families work together, we can raise children that love the Lord with all of their heart. As church leaders, let's stop wishing that parents would be more involved in their children's spiritual development and work to make it a reality. As we engage parents, we will see children's lives changed!