

Equipping Parents

When parents are unaware or unprepared

This is the most common situation. In this case, the *church leadership* needs to act. Ministry to children and ministry to adults must be integrated at the same time that parents learn how to fulfill their role. When integration is effective, it gives the parent a tool to use.

The church can do these things:

“Sermon discussion points” for the family are included every Sunday in the bulletin, and parents are encouraged to use them on the way home.

Parents are kept aware of children’s ministry curriculum topics – even provided with a curriculum matrix. The matrix is presented as “this is what you will want to reinforce in your child,” not “this is what we are teaching your child” (get the difference?).

As a last item in adult Bible classes, use five minutes for the class to discuss together, “What can we share with our children from this lesson?”

Coordinate the curriculum in a parents’ Bible class with the children’s curriculum.

Parents are constantly reminded of the benefits of spiritually training their children.

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When parents are unsaved or unwilling

Children's workers must act. In fact, there is much that they can do to reach parents and equip them to fulfill their role. But why children's workers? Because the child is the open door to reach the parents.

The children's worker can do these things:

E-mail the parents regularly, including a request to "ask your child what we learned Sunday." Include a message for them to share with their child. (Don't send the e-mail directly to him, though.) Your student will love to get something mid-week!

Phone the parent. When you phone, *praise* their child! You can build a relationship with parents fastest when they know you like their child! Don't know what to say? Praise them about their character first. Then, praise their behavior or attitude if you can. If that would take stretching the truth, try their appearance (I loved Joel's shirt Sunday), their energy, or their sociability, but *find something!*

Talk to the parents when they pick up their child. Have a simple homework assignment that you communicate to the parents.

Invite parents into the classroom for the last few minutes so that they hear the end of the lesson. Then you can talk to them: "Parents, review this with your kids this week."

Give your kids a test over the curriculum they have been studying (make the test over the Bible content, not the puppet script), and share the results with the parents.

Have celebratory events. Invite the parents. Clue in key church parents, so they will help you build relationships with the others.

Have a sign-in table with "greeters." Wherever parents drop off their children, *make* a reason for the parents to talk to the greeter.

All of these have a purpose: to reach the parents, first to share the gospel, then to involve them in the spiritual guidance of their child.

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When parents are saved and willing.

Mom and dad, does that describe you? Then you must act! This model is for you – if you understand that the responsibility for the spiritual training of your children is yours, here's what you can do:

First, adopt these three perspectives:

The spiritual training of your children is the most important part of their education – and something that will have limited impact if you don't lead it!

Children's workers in the church assist you with your responsibility, not the other way around.

The training you receive from your church is information to pass on to your children.

Then, follow it with action:

Spend time in teaching your children (more on this in chapter three). Make it regular, and follow a curriculum.

Regularly communicate these points to your children:

- ✚ Learning the Bible is the most important thing you can learn
- ✚ The Bible is completely true
- ✚ What you learn from the Bible will keep you from many problems later in life.
- ✚ Our family loves the Bible!

Quiz your children on their understanding. Make the quiz fun – keep score, or make a game out of it. The quiz will help you understand what they need to learn better.

Keep abreast of what they are being taught. Be actively involved in reinforcing the importance of what they are learning from their teacher or club leader.