


3-2023

Impressions and Arrows: Forming Faithful Preteen Hearts

Wes Gallagher
wgallagher20@georgefox.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin>

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gallagher, Wes, "Impressions and Arrows: Forming Faithful Preteen Hearts" (2023). *Doctor of Ministry*. 586.
<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/586>

This Project Portfolio is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROJECT PORTFOLIO:

IMPRESSIONS AND ARROWS: FORMING FAITHFUL PRETEEN HEARTS



IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:

WES GALLAGHER

PROJECT FACULTY:

DR. JEFFERY SAVAGE

PORTLAND, OREGON

MARCH 2023



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This certifies that the doctoral Project Portfolio of

Wes Gallagher

has been approved by
the Evaluation Committee on March 16, 2023
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

Evaluation Committee:

Primary Project Faculty: Jeffery Savage, DMin

Second Project Faculty: Donna Wallace, DMin

Lead Mentor: Ken Van Vliet, DMin

Evaluation Committee Referee: Loren Kerns, PhD

Copyright © 2023 by Wes Gallagher

All rights reserved

Dedication

This book is dedicated first to my arrows: Haylee, Cassie, Brayden, Bryson, Baron and Kerrigan Gallagher. Each of you is a world changer, and I am honored to be your dad. To my fellow archer, Stephanie, you have been with me through many peaks and valleys. Thank you for always inspiring me to keep my hand on the bow. Finally, to the quiver from which I came, thank you Don and Jean Gallagher for your continued love and support.

Acknowledgments

First, I thank my wife Stephanie for encouraging me to begin this journey. She pushed me to take this leap of faith knowing it would mean sacrifice and time demands for our family.

Next, I acknowledge my project faculty Dr. Jeffery Savage. He has been a steady hand and patient guide through this entire process. I can't imagine completing this process without my peer group, the *Little Savages*: Michael Spivey, Brad Pembleton, David Brown, and Nathaniel Rhoads. These brothers have become lifelong friends as we have carried one another through this entire journey.

I want to thank two professors who not only mentored me through seminary at Lipscomb but have also served as guides for my project work. Dr. Gary Holloway first introduced me to the terms and concepts of spiritual formation in the fall of 2006. For this project, he has given me important guidance in writing for "the church." In 2007, I approached Dr. Holloway with a question, "How does all of this spiritual formation stuff apply to children?" He replied with Dr. Holly Allen's phone number and email address. Holly invited me into the world of children's spirituality and has been a mentor in this field ever since. She continues to serve as a guide and mentor as I grow into new territory as an academic.

Additionally, I thank the young families and the senior members of the faith communities that faithfully participated in my ministry experiments over the past decade. In particular, I want to thank those who participated in the workshops that guided the formation of this project and served as readers of early drafts. It was appropriate for Donna Smith, a 30-year veteran of 4th grade Sunday School, to edit the text of my project. You all have blessed me with the gift of your time.

Finally, to God who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, thank you Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May everything that comes from this project continue to be in and of the Trinity. Maranatha!

Epigraph

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. *Impress them* on your children." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7a, NIV)

Table of Contents

Dedication	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Epigraph	v
Table of Contents	vi
Research Method	vii
Abstract	viii
Introduction	1
Doctoral Project	7
Project Launch Plan	36
Appendix A— Milestone 1 The NPO Charter	39
Appendix B— Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay	62
Appendix C—Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report	78
Appendix D—Milestone 4 Design Research Report	121
Appendix E—Project Appendix Documentation	176
Bibliography	219

Research Method

This Doctoral Project utilized a blended research and design methodology called 'Collaborative Design for Ministry and Nonprofit Contexts'. In Collaborative Design, practitioners work with stakeholder representatives to address a Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) in their context. Using a combination of bibliographic resources, local knowledge derived from stakeholder Workshops, and an iterative process of continuous adjustment using 'just enough' feedback information at each juncture of development, practitioners produce an application-oriented Project that seeks to effect Christ-centered change.

Abstract

This project seeks to address the following NPO: Christian parents in today's culture need resources and training to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith. Today's Christian parents often struggle to share their faith and values with their children. Parents feel that their own relationship with God is too shallow, that their calendar is too full, and that their relationship with their children is inadequate. Several reassurances surfaced from this research. First, parents and extended families really do have an impact on the faith of their children. Of course, involvement in a church family is of great importance, but the focus of this research is on helping parents grow in their interactions and involvement with children's faith development. This project seeks to invite, inform, and equip parents to play a greater role in the spiritual formation of their children. The author's vocational background is as a parent of six children from age 9 to 21, a veteran of children's ministry, and an aspiring professor of children's spirituality, spiritual formation, and leadership. The product of this research will be an accessible book designed to motivate, inform, and give practical action steps to parents who long to engage in spiritual formation with their children. The Shema and other key texts from Deuteronomy and the Psalms will be presented to help inspire and cast a hopeful vision. Definitions will be established for concepts such as spirituality, spiritual formation, and faith. Basic information will be shared related to developmental theories and brain formation in pre-adolescence. Practical applications include improving parent child communication, making holidays meaningful, finding ways for pre-teens to become contributors to the church, and engaging in stories of scripture, family experiences, and church history.

Introduction

My NPO Journey

Discovery Phase

The product of my doctoral research is a book designed for Christian parents of preteen children who want to grow in their knowledge and practice as spiritual guides for their offspring. My project is designed to address the following NPO: Christian parents in today's culture need resources and training to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith. Over the course of the design process several project ideas were considered including a Sunday school class for parents, a workshop or seminar covering the same discoveries, or curriculum for an intergenerational small group that would seek to facilitate parent-child engagement. Two factors ultimately drove the decision to produce a book. First, this format requires a comprehensive organization of my thoughts and research that will serve as a guide for any class, small group, or workshop-based teaching for parents in the future. In a church hallway conversation with a longtime friend and fellow Christian father, it was recommended that I put all of my thoughts into book form, so that people who did not understand my approach to ministry with children, would have a chance to see the global view of my ministry philosophy. Secondly, not currently serving in a congregational ministry role made some of the other options more difficult to execute at the present time.

As I entered the discovery phase of this process I was serving as the Child and Family Minister at the Collegieside Church of Christ in Cookeville, TN. Collegieside is a demographically young, white, middle-class congregation situated on the edge of the campus of Tennessee Tech, a regional university. The weekly attendance at the church is around 600, with a roster of about 150 children from birth to sixth grade. At the outset, I envisioned the NPO primarily in that setting: Parents at the Collegieside Church of Christ find it challenging to talk with their early middle school children about matters of God and faith. My Discovery Workshop included four mothers of 5th and 6th grade children. These mothers had a breadth of perspectives as their personal stories varied in terms of the duration and level of their involvement within the local church. Some had older children, and the level of involvement of their husbands was a significant variable. The final participant was an empty nest father who serves as a mentor to many parents in the church.

Three root causes of the NPO surfaced in the Discovery Workshop: time, the parent's own relationship with God, and parental confidence. It was observed that quality family time is minimized by the busy schedules that families keep. Parents are often taking children to organized events such as athletics, lessons, school or even church activities. Very little unclaimed, unstructured time exists in the family

schedule. This lack of time feeds into the next struggle which is the parent's personal relationship with God. Parents are not taking the time they need to commune with God and address their own spiritual needs. This leads to the third root cause which is a lack of confidence in parents to address spiritual issues with their own children. Participants in the workshop concluded that the NPO was indeed a real problem that was worthy of attention. They believed that a tool addressing the NPO should improve parental confidence, parent-child relationships, as well as parent-God and child-God relationships.

A summary of the Discovery Workshop was shared with three individuals each of which is focused on the well-being of children. These three individuals included an elder of the local church who is a pediatrician, an author and professor of children's spirituality from the Restoration Movement, and a professor, author, and education director in the Lutheran Church. Interviews supported the idea that parents lack the confidence to have important conversations with their children. A recurring theme was that the preteens stage is a very important time for open parent-child communication, however, the seeds of communication and dialogue are best planted at an earlier age. Part of this dialogue development pertains to the asking of deeper, empathy-inspiring questions when talking about Bible stories with preschool and early elementary children. Additionally, the value of all parent-child conversations was mentioned. Finally, interviewees noted that other adults, not just parents, play an important role in a child's spiritual development.

Design Phase

Participants in the Design Workshop included two mothers and one father of current preteens, an empty nest father from the local congregation, and an empty nest mother from another church in town. Only one participant carried over from the Discovery Workshop, but the new group confirmed the findings from the previous year. This workshop believed that a successful project addressing this NPO would improve parental confidence and increase the volume of parent child dialogue about God and faith in the home. As a result of the workshop, the NPO morphed to a broader audience and adapted a tone of parental desire rather than addressing the parent's need for help: Christian parents in today's culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith.

The Design Workshop produced three concept pitches. The first big idea was a parenting class focused on improving parental confidence in their own faith, developing communication skills, and thinking critically about the family calendar. The second project idea was the development of resources that parents could use to create family faith experiences in the home. The final concept was curriculum and training for intergenerational small groups that would bring together parents, children, and additional generations for study, prayer, worship, and life sharing gatherings.

These concepts were shared with three experts in the field of children's spirituality including a semi-retired intergenerational ministry guru from the Catholic tradition, a retired professor, children's pastor, and expert in family ministry from the Presbyterian tradition, and a Church of Christ minister whose Doctor of Ministry Project focused on intergenerational experiences. These interviews were both inspiring and inciting. All of the project ideas seemed worthy, and even more ideas were floated in our discussions. Perhaps the most helpful advice came from the recent Doctor of Ministry graduate. He reminded me that this project would not be my magnum opus, but rather the starting point for future ministry. His advice helped me to think realistically about the scope and limits of the project.

As I entered the Design Research stage, I was able to focus on two categories of projects. The first concept was a Family/Intergenerational Small Group Curriculum. I was able to produce a high-resolution prototype for this since I had actually created such a curriculum for Easter the previous year. The second prototype was a low-resolution concept map of a parent training series. The quality of the small group curriculum was appreciated, but feedback resurfaced the need to motivate and prepare parents before the successful implementation of such a curriculum. That need pushed me toward the parent training concept. Feedback was split when it came to the delivery method of the parent training. I proposed several possible venues for this parent training to my stakeholders including a Sunday School class, weekend seminar, online video lessons, or a book. Feedback was diverse, all of these options were on the table.

After much deliberation, prayer, and a pivotal conversation with my project faculty, the most viable prototype was determined to be a book that would present a new vision for children's ministry within the church that respects the spirit of God in children and the vital role of parents in the process of spiritual formation. Due to a professional transition, I was no longer in a congregational ministry setting, so implementing a class did not seem feasible. Writing a book made sense because it would require me to organize my thoughts on the matter in a relatively comprehensive format that could serve as content for any other medium of teaching and training. Also, with my desire to transition into higher education, producing a book would be an important steppingstone to that end.

Delivery Phase

As I transitioned into the delivery phase much reflection was given to the target audience of a book on children's spirituality. Returning to the NPO, I was reminded that assisting Christian parents, of which I am one, had been the focus of this journey from day one. Three important movements would set the scope for the book. First, this project must inspire parents to engage in the process of investing in their children. This became the focus of Section 1 that includes chapters which invite parents to enter the journey of spiritually forming their children. Second, parents need to gain some knowledge that will give them the self-confidence to take risks and try new things. Section 2 will include chapters that inform parents about the developmental phase of preteens, define vocabulary

related to spirituality and spiritual formation, confirm the spiritual life and depth of children, and affirm the value and significance of parents in the formational process. Finally, parents need practical starting points to help them act. Section 3 will provide practical advice for parents to engage with their preteens in spiritually formative ways.

With the guidance of a mentor who has published many Sunday School level books for my stream of Christianity, I established four benchmarks related to the quality and process of writing for my audience.

Benchmark #1: Because my audience consists of parents who have busy schedules - balancing work, church, and home life - it is important that this book is easy for them to read. I will use the tools available on readable.com to evaluate each chapter to make sure that the Flesch-Kincaid Grade level is at or below the 8.0 level and the Flesch Reading Ease score is above 60. Furthermore, each chapter will have a word count between 2,000-2,500 words and the entire book will be 30,000-35,000 words.

Benchmark #2: By May of 2023, the book will be submitted to at least one publisher, ACU Press, for consideration with recommendations from well published authors who are serving as mentors in my writing process. Book proposals will be submitted to at least three additional publishers by December of 2023 if ACU Press does not accept the first proposal. (Baker, IVP, and Wipf & Stock)

Benchmark #3: The project will be used by at least one group of parents representing at least four households by the end of 2023. The book will be used by four more such groups by the end of 2024. By the end of 2025, the book will have been used in at least five different local church bodies.

Benchmark #4: Each chapter will conclude with discussion questions and a spiritual practice. Chapters in Section 2 will include recommended readings for deeper study. Chapters in Section 3 will include recommended resources to aid in the implementation of proposed practices. These Practices and discussion questions will be tested in a beta group to confirm their viability and productivity. This end matter will be included in the 2,000-2,500-word count for the chapter.

The same feedback process that I have used on the first four chapters of this project will continue until the entire book is completed. Initial chapter drafts will be read by a handful of parents who will give feedback via a Google Form regarding their interest and the usefulness of the content. Once the usefulness of the information is confirmed, I will submit the text to [Readable.com](https://readable.com) to examine the reading level and readability of the text. This tool will help me self-edit the text into a highly readable form and length. My writing mentor will critique and give feedback at this point and each chapter will then be set in a final form. As sections are completed, they will be shared with my children's spirituality expert mentor to be evaluated for content. Finally, through a couple of parenting class opportunities

the material will be tested in its beta form with parents in my current church setting. This will be especially helpful in evaluating the quality of the Discussion Guides for each chapter.

By graduation in May, I will submit a book proposal to ACU Press. It is my goal to have this book published and in hand within two years of graduation. It is my hope that this project is preparing me for fruitful ministry in three venues. My prayer is that in the future my ministry will bear fruit in my local church, in other congregations around the country, and that it helps me reach my goal of teaching Children's Spirituality and Children's Ministry at the university level. As I write the application chapters, it is my suspicion that ideas will materialize for curriculum and other resources that need to be developed. Those chapters will outline trajectories for future work over the next decade.

Evaluating My Learning Experience

Being the parent of six children from age 9 through 21 has served simultaneously as my greatest inspiration and a formidable obstacle since this project began. Finding the blocks of time to commit to this research has been incredibly difficult at many junctures. The greatest obstacle that I have faced in this journey is the loss of my ministry job at the midpoint of the program. I served as the Child and Family minister in this congregation from 2014 through the end of 2021. Furthermore, this congregation was my spiritual home since starting college in 1995. This sudden change was a devastating blow professionally, emotionally, socially, and financially. By the grace of God, just over a year later my family is beginning to settle into a new spiritual community.

At this point I have written between one-fourth and one-third of this book. Much more research will be needed to complete the chapters that remain. Section 3 will be the most difficult section to complete, because I will have to face my many shortcomings regarding these practices in my own home. As a parent of busy children, the most challenging chapter on the horizon is Chapter 12: "Dealing with Distractions: Technology and Activities." The struggle these two distractions bring into my home are ever present and to this point no satisfactory solutions have been identified. Finally, I hold open the possibility that there are additional chapters that will need to be part of this project. Perhaps that feeling will not go away even after the goal of publishing is reached.

Alternate approaches of merit to my NPO include other formats of parent education such as weekly classes or weekend seminars. As mentioned above, the book will serve as a guide for developing and implementing these other formats. Again, the application chapters will challenge me to find or develop resources for parents to assist in the application process. As the Design Workshop revealed, take home resources for parents are both needed and lacking at this time. The other viable alternative

that really attracts my attention is the development of curriculum for intergenerational, family inclusive small groups. This alternative would provide an excellent environment for parents and children to enter into the practice of talking to one another about spiritual matters.

The key learnings from my research journey are the three obstacles that were a recurring theme in both my workshops and one-on-one interviews. From the start, families are busy with activities and distracted by technology, limiting the unstructured time available for dialogue of any kind between parent and child. Second, parents are struggling to claim and understand their own faith. This personal struggle leads to the third roadblock, parents lack of confidence to discuss spiritual matters with their children. These three challenges must be adequately addressed to help parents become spiritual guides in their own home.

Next Steps

Every remaining chapter requires further research, or at least the arrangement of previous research discoveries into a coherent presentation of information. My plan after graduation is to proceed at a pace of drafting one chapter per month, and additionally passing the previous chapter through the feedback systems for editing and revising. It is my intention to dedicate six weeks in the Fall of 2023 and the Spring of 2024 to use a beta form of the project to teach a class for parents in my local church. Once the book is completed, I plan to develop presentations for a seminar on Spiritually forming children to be shared with churches across the country.

Conclusion

One of my greatest disappointments in this journey is the ubiquitous prevalence of my NPO. Parents need resources and training; they need help discerning a realistic balance of activities on the calendar. This is not necessarily surprising, because I know the struggle intimately myself. The convictions developed from my project research in many ways contributed to my vocational struggles. Consumer driven children's ministry is not the solution to my NPO, yet I found myself in a situation where I was butting heads with proponents of a consumer driven mentality. My philosophy of ministry was a factor in losing my job a year ago. This was disappointing to put it mildly.

The process of pulling this project together has given me increased confidence in my professional knowledge and taught me a great deal about the writing process. I have no doubts that I can finish the remaining chapters in a reasonable timeframe. It is my dream to see this project through to publication. It is my prayer that the book will help many parents gain confidence in their role as spiritual guides for their children.

Doctoral Project

Introduction

The purpose of my Doctoral Project is to provide inspiration and encouragement, background information, and ultimately practical applications to assist parents of preteen children in the journey of spiritually forming the next generation. This project is an attempt to accomplish these stated goals through the writing of a book for which the intended audience is busy Christian parents of preteen children who desire to pass faith in Christ to their children.

In the pages that follow I will showcase my project by sharing the table of contents, an annotated summary of chapters to be included, and four completed chapters. The table of contents provides an overview of the project scope while the summaries of future chapters add specificity regarding the substance of the chapters not presented in their entirety. The book will consist of three distinct sections. The primary goal of section one is to engage the reader and inspire them to commit to reading the entire book. The second section provides background information enabling parents to develop a common language and to enter the discussion of spiritual formation. The third section includes chapters that focus on application and formative parental engagement with preteens.

The four showcased chapters demonstrate both the nature and quality of the entire project. The showcased chapters include the first two chapters of the book, and additionally one chapter each from sections two and three. Given the audience of this book, I have chosen to use an endnote format for citations.

Presentation of Project

Impressions and Arrows:

Forming Faithful Preteen Hearts

Table of Contents

SECTION 1: INSPIRING THE IMPRESSORS

CHAPTER 1: INVITATION TO SHEMA

CHAPTER 2: CALLED BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN

CHAPTER 3: ARROWS IN HUMBLE HANDS

SECTION 2: INVESTIGATING THE ARROWS, ARCHERS, AND TARGETS

CHAPTER 4: BETWEEN TADPOLE AND FROG

CHAPTER 5: WHERE IS MY TARGET?

CHAPTER 6: THE ARROWS ARE ALIVE

CHAPTER 7: THE IMPACT OF THE ARCHER

SECTION 3: INITIATING THE PROCESS

CHAPTER 8: CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS

CHAPTER 9: PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITY, WORSHIP, AND MISSION

CHAPTER 10: NURTURING DIALOGUE AND SHARED STORIES

CHAPTER 11: ENGAGING GOD'S STORY TOGETHER

CHAPTER 12: DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS: TECHNOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES

CHAPTER 13: CHARTING THE PATH TOGETHER

Impressions and Arrows:

Forming Faithful Preteen Hearts

Chapter Summaries

Section 1: Inspiration for the Journey

CHAPTER 1: INVITATION TO SHEMA*

CHAPTER 2: CALLED BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN*

CHAPTER 3: ARROWS IN HUMBLE HANDS

Starting with the imagery of our children as “arrows in the hands of warriors” from Psalm 127, this chapter will inspire a vision of what can be. This chapter will describe the impact we can have on the world through well-formed descendants. It will include words of motivation and inspiration from scripture and shared life experiences. The formative practice will be a contemplative exercise in which the parent visualizes an adult version of their child and lists the desired characteristics they want to nurture in the child. This will be the last chapter finalized and will conclude with a brief overview and introduction of the rest of the book.

Section 2: Investigating the Arrows, Archers, and Targets

CHAPTER 4: BETWEEN TADPOLE AND FROG*

CHAPTER 5: WHERE IS MY TARGET?

Words like spirituality, spiritual formation, and faith are tossed around freely in Christian circles, but what do these words really mean to us as parents? The challenge of this chapter will be to build a working understanding of these terms without losing the audience in the minutia of scholarship. Perhaps the greatest task will be to help parents move from the performative rubric to which they hold themselves and their children, to a formative model of parenting. A secondary goal for this chapter is to acclimate parents to the language of spiritual formation so that they might progress confidently to higher level writings in the future.

CHAPTER 6: THE ARROWS ARE ALIVE

The goal of this chapter is to convince parents at a core level that children are spiritual beings. Robert Coles stumbled into a recognition of the spiritual life of children after decades of psychoanalytic research. David Hay and Rebecca Nye performed a large empirical study in England revealing an innate spirituality in children. Most recently, Lisa Miller has advanced the understanding of the biology of faith. Children have a direct connection with the God who made them. This chapter will help parents articulate this truth as they consider how to nurture and support that direct connection. Parents will learn that children are made for connection with God, self, others, and creation.

CHAPTER 7: THE IMPACT OF THE ARCHER

Parents need to know that they matter! Vern Bengston's decades-long research project proves just that. Coming of age in the 1960s during the sexual revolution, Bengston himself doubted whether the family could maintain its role as primary influencer and director of a child's spiritual life. However, his four decades of research indicates that families have maintained the position of top influencer despite the explosion of new media influences during that time. This chapter will introduce three modes of influence labeled by researchers as transmissional, transactional, and transformational. Essentially, these correlate to providing a positive example, intentionally engaging in meaning making, and helping the child establish a spiritually focused peer group.

Section 3: Initiating the Process

CHAPTER 8: CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS*

CHAPTER 9: PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITY, WORSHIP, AND MISSION

This chapter is necessary because of the work of Erikson and Jesus. Erikson teaches us about the social nature of human development. We are not creatures that grow and thrive in a state of independence, rather we are social beings whose formation is contingent upon our connection with the community. Preteens successfully integrate into a social group by being capable contributors. This chapter will discuss ways to connect children to the local community of faith by participating in the social, worshipful, and missional life of the local church. We cannot settle for our preteens simply being spectators of the church. They must find a place to fit in and serve if we want them to have a sense of belonging.

CHAPTER 10: NURTURING DIALOGUE AND SHARED STORIES

Parent-child communication is one of the core struggles that inspired this project. This chapter will help parents move toward healthier interactions with their children. This begins with an understanding

that the relationship between parent and child is mutual and bi-directional. To some, this may sound like parents abdicating the mantle of authority. However, as we recognize the maturation that is happening in our preteens, we are reminded of the desire to see them become strong, independent decision makers. By allowing give-and-take conversations, we are teaching them to think independently and develop their own priorities while we still have strong influence over their lives. Tools will be shared in this chapter to improve both quantity and quality of parent child communication.

CHAPTER 11: ENGAGING GOD’S STORY TOGETHER

How do we engage God’s story together as a family? This chapter will explore a myriad of models to initiate family dialogue about God. This chapter is much more than how to study the Bible with kids, but that will be a part of the conversation. How can we find God in other mediums as well? How can a movie night lead to discussions of faith and ethics? What books can we read as a family that will lead our conversations to deep and meaningful places? Finally, how do we share stories of our life in a way that reveals God’s presence, patience, and persistent love without sounding too preachy. Since stories communicate so impactfully to preteens, how can we better share the stories of scripture, church tradition, family history, and our personal lives with them?

CHAPTER 12: DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS: TECHNOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES

One of the biggest dilemmas with which parents of this generation struggle is childhood access to technology. In this chapter we will explore the current realities and dangers of technology usage. We will explore realistic mindsets and expectations pertaining to various forms of technology and online activity, then share tips regarding how to talk about these matters with preteens. I will share some helpful tools that assist parents to create boundaries and monitor online activity. Additionally, the chapter will present redemptive online tools that can be used to make technology a tool for good in the hands of our preteens.

CHAPTER 13: CHARTING THE PATH TOGETHER

What is a “rule of life”? How do we as parents live by a rule? How do we build a rule of life as a family? Spiritual growth is a product of consistency over time. What are the practices we desire to consistently engage in as parents and as a family? This chapter will present a plan to build a personal rule of life for parents. Additionally, the process of developing a list of core values for the family through a process of group discernment will be outlined. The end goal of a group discernment process will be a family covenant outlining core values and commitments for the entire family.

*Showcased Chapters

Chapter 1

Invitation to Shema

We all have experiences from our youth that grow in significance as we age. One such experience for me was working for my father in the family business during my college years. My father, like his father before him, is a master craftsman. A friend introduced my grandfather to guitar making as he sought his woodworking advice. The man made affordable “student” guitars for a large music company. My grandfather J.W. was a meticulous craftsman who made the finest cherry, walnut, and rosewood furniture in the region. Desiring to express his attention to detail and custom craftsmanship, he created the J.W. Gallagher and Son guitar brand in 1965.

As a child, I remember seeing large tour buses parked in front of the shop as I rode home from school. I knew that those Nashville music folks were there to see my dad. I listened with great pride to the recordings that featured studio musicians playing my father's instruments. When we watched performers, my eyes scanned the headstocks in search of the signature curve that designated my father's work.

Learning a portion of the family trade from my father was a special experience. I learned to form, shape, and glue the tops, backs, and sides that form the body of the guitar. One step in the process was extra special to me. On the thin strip of wood inside the guitar body, I stamped each instrument with the company brand. If you look through the sound hole of a Gallagher guitar, you will see pressed into the wood and stained with black ink, “J.W. Gallagher and Son Wartrace, TN.” The act of making that impression felt like a sacred moment every time I did it. It was my name that was going on the inside of that guitar. I wanted the letters to be clear and lasting. Only God knew where that instrument would travel.

As parents, we make impressions on our children through a multitude of moments, and each one is important. My role in building a guitar was well defined. I checked off a defined list of steps to complete my work. There were worries sometimes. Did I shave that brace too thin? Is there enough glue to hold this thing together for 100 years? Is the impression I left inside the body clear and visible? Once I completed my work, I passed it to the next person in the shop. I could produce two or three of those bodies in a week. The process of parenting is not so defined or concise. It is a life's work that is never completed.

Like the guitars, my children will carry my name with them wherever they go. As my grandfather insisted with the guitars he made, each child will be intricate and unique. We believe that humans

are not products of a cold assembly line. Each child is the handmade product of our divine, creative Father. The life they live will in many ways bear out what I have impressed upon the hearts beating inside their little bodies. Those impressions come through a multitude of moments, and the entire process is sacred.

How did your body feel when I began talking about the impressions you are leaving on your children? As our children are entering their preteen years, we face a significant transition. We begin to look back and remember all the beauty and joy of their early development. Sometimes, we grieve the end of those innocent early years. Always, we wonder if we have done enough to shape and form their souls. We look ahead and see them quickly becoming grown-ups like us, and it is scary. The opportunity to shape and mold a little human was an exciting prospect in those early days. Now that we are a decade into the process, we know that it is a hard, even grueling task. Why? Simply because life is hard. Keeping the faith ourselves is hard enough in this fallen world. How much greater is the challenge to nurture faith in a young, tender child?

We start our journey together with a passage from the Old Testament that may or may not be familiar to you. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is known as the Shema. What does Shema mean and why is this passage known by this name? Shema is simply the first word in the passage, and in typical Jewish fashion the first word of the text is used to identify it. As for a definition, we interpret Shema with one of three words depending on the context: hear, listen, or obey.

The Shema is one of Israel's most sacred passages. More than a verse of scripture, it has persisted as a daily prayer for the Jewish faithful for millennia. That's a long time! We live in a world that focuses on the here and now. It never ceases to amaze me that in my mid-forties, I am still discovering such important nuggets of truth. This token of grace has existed and been passed down by faithful Christians for centuries. Yet, it was not a part of my limited, 20th century Christian childhood. Despite my ignorance of many things, even in me the faith persists.

The Shema captured my attention nearly two decades ago. At that time, I was beginning the journey of fatherhood and working my way through seminary. I knew that Deuteronomy 6, was the go-to passage for sermons on Christian parenting. However, I did not know the life of these words as an oft-repeated prayer through the centuries. I grew up in a Christian tradition that did not value rote prayer. As a young adult these repeatable prayers drew me in, especially when I came face to face with the truth that sometimes life is hard. Sometimes in our darkest moments we cannot muster the words to speak to God. You can't squeeze blood out of a turnip. Likewise, you can't produce coherent words, phrases, or thoughts from a broken heart. In those moments, we learn the value of the words we have hidden in our hearts. I suspect sages throughout history have known this truth. Rabbis, priests, and prophets knew the long-term value of committing meaningful scriptures and prayers to memory. Consider the impact of this practice on our Lord.

How did Jesus respond when placed under pressure and asked to identify the greatest command? He began, "Hear O, Israel, the LORD our God, the Lord is one." Why? Because every day, multiple times a day, from the time he could speak, Jesus prayed the Shema. These words were impressed deep in Jesus' soul. They were part of the rubric by which he assessed everything he saw in the world. The Shema was part of the scaffolding upon which Jesus built his understanding. For Jesus, this prayer outlined life on Earth as an obedient subject of God the Father.

In my youth, I associated rote prayer with stained-glass and purified settings. I grasped a timeless, heavenly connection as I learned to repeat words that had been meaningful to the saints who had gone before. What I didn't grasp was the earthy significance of this and other Christian practices. In my childhood, the bread and juice of communion seemed otherworldly. Only later did I consider the commonness of such items in the meals Jesus ate in his life. Bread and juice were to the early disciples what peanut butter and jelly are to my kids...the stuff of life. So it is with prayer. Yes, there is a significant experience of connection with God and God's people when we repeat sacred words. Equally beautiful is the reflection that the parents who taught Jesus to pray the Shema lived real lives, too. Splinters in your finger? Real. How am I going to feed these kids tonight? Real. Why do I always feel like an outsider? Real. Is it already time to get out of bed and do it all again? Real.

As I write about parenting, I am reminded of how real I am. Yes, you understand, real is a code word for flawed, coming up short, wish I could have a do-over on that reaction. I have six children: three boys and three girls; five biological and one adopted. My oldest is 21, the youngest is 8. I am a mud on the carpet, scrapes on the knee, I can't believe she is already moving away to college parent. I don't know much, but I know I love them. I know I want them to be spiritual and faithful. I want them to love God, love people, and if possible, still love my wife and me.

While you and I discuss the journey of parenting, you may have moments when you experience guilt. When that feeling comes, I want you to remember two things. First, I write from a place of humility. It is a humility that realizes that I don't know it all. Even more, it is a humility that confesses I often do not live up to what little I do know. Second, remember grace. Without grace, we have no hope for tomorrow, especially as parents. God's grace helps us let go of past mistakes. God's grace tells us that we can be better next time.

With humility and grace, I reflect again on guitar making. The guitar shop still has forms and jigs that my grandfather created in the 1960s. Some of the same tools and techniques have endured the test of time. However, on occasion, a better tool is found, or a new method is implemented. So it is with Christian parenting. We have thousands of years of examples from which to learn. Many of the patterns of faith transmission are timeless. Yet, in a world that is ever-changing, we are called to adapt, modify, and faithfully apply new techniques and practices all the time. As we journey together through this process, we will explore the old paths, even as we consider modern situations.

Unlike those guitar bodies that I passed down the assembly line, our work as parents is never done. There is no finish line. More importantly it is never too late to change our ways or renew our efforts. I do not possess all the answers, nor have I perfectly applied what I do know. For both of us, each new chapter in this book presents an opportunity to turn the page and begin a fresh new day of parenting. May God bless us as we seek to impress God's love and God's ways on the hearts of our children.

Discussion Guide

1. When the topic of passing your faith on to your children comes up, what do you feel in your body? Are you full of excitement at the starting line? Are you comfortable and confident with your progress on this journey? Do you find yourself looking for grace and new motivation?
2. Are you familiar with the Shema? Take a moment and reread Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What jumps out at you from this passage? (Be sure to underline the first sentence in verse 7, that is our theme.)
3. **Formative Challenge:** Pray the Shema. For the next week, make Deuteronomy 6:4-9 part of your daily prayer life. Pray this prayer when you wake up in the morning and when you lie down in bed each night.

HEMA

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These commandments that I give you today are to be on 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.

(Deut. 6:4-9 NIV)

Chapter 2

Called Back to the Mountain

When school starts next fall, we will have one child in high school, two in middle school, and a fourth-grade daughter in our home. However, we already have one daughter in college on a campus six hours west of our home. My second daughter just signed her National Letter of Intent to play basketball at a school four and a half hours east of our hometown. I know that my role as a parent is lifelong, but they really do grow up. Somewhere between first grade and six feet tall they stop snuggling in your lap. Eventually, we recognize that one sweet phase of life transitioned into something new.

My wife and I wanted to be the most significant influence in their early years. The time we have spent with them will always be a highlight of our lives. We believe that a child's early years are vital to their lifetime development. Over time, we made room for others to take more active roles in their daily lives. The time has come for the oldest ones to spread their wings and leave the nest.

Moses understood the precipice on which we stand. In the book of Exodus, we see Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt after God brings ten plagues on the land and its people. The crossing of the Red Sea is one of the greatest miracles of the Old Testament. This event was followed closely by the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. So, why are the Ten Commandments recorded again in Deuteronomy? Forty years of wilderness wanderings have passed. Moses and the people of God are on the edge of the Promised Land ready to enter, settle, and start their new life. There is just one problem: nearly every adult who was present for the plagues, Red Sea crossing, and Mt. Sinai lawgiving, is dead. More pressing on the heart of Moses is his imminent death.

The context for the book of Deuteronomy centers around 120-year-old Moses. He has led God's people for forty years. He looks with love and concern over the people he has shepherded and here makes the most of his final days. Sure, Moses is standing and speaking to the multitudes, but do not miss that these are deathbed monologues. Moses knows that many challenges lie ahead. The existing population of the Promised Land is not in agreement with God's plan for a change of ownership. The spiritual and cultural influence of the people of the land is a big concern. The current inhabitants do not recognize the God of Israel. Do you sense the similarities between the situation of Moses and my situation? In many ways he has fathered the Israelites. Now, he must let them go.

In forty years of leadership since the burning bush incident, Moses has seen it all. He had mountain top experiences. They walked through the sea on dry ground. Moses even viewed the Promised Land from the top of the mountain. However, he also came off the mountain to find his associates creating idols and leading worship to them. Moses pleaded with God to forgive the sinful people. At other

times, he has asked God to smite the sinful people and just start over. Moses dealt with grumbling and complaining. Moses experienced plenty of sin and insurrection. Through it all Moses walked with God and redirected the sheep. Thus far, the people of God have persisted. They have done so with Moses going to God as their priest. As their prophet, he directed them in the way of God.

Did the previous paragraph remind you of the relationship with your children? Have you parented long enough to know about grumbling and insurrection? Do you ever return to the scene and find that constructive family tasks devolved into mass chaos? As he contemplates his own death, can you relate to Moses' concern for the generation he is leaving to fend for themselves? He knows they face their greatest challenge-the conquest of the Promised Land-without him at the helm. If you can relate, let us consider the instructions given in Deuteronomy.

The theme of Deuteronomy Chapter four is faithfulness to God's covenant. They are to achieve this by diligently remembering what God has done among them. Remembering must be perpetuated through faithful teaching to the next generation. Moses instructs God's people to remember the events "your eyes have seen". He commands them to "make them known to your children and your children's children." (Deuteronomy 4:9 NRSV)

Do not keep these words at arm's length. We were not there for the Red Sea crossing or the giving of the Ten Commandments. We did not experience God's sustenance through the daily miracle of manna in the wilderness for forty years. Likewise, we did not walk the dirt paths of Galilee while Jesus preached the kingdom of God, healed the sick, and raised the dead. We did not witness the crucifixion, nor are we first-hand witnesses of the resurrection. We find our place in the story of God because of faithful others. It was our parents, Sunday School teachers, or friends who invited us into the family of God. We must embrace our role as people who have received a blessing. Somehow, we became participants in the ongoing story of God's people. Our calling is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and invite our children into the same story.

The story of Moses has become our story! Does that seem weird and anachronistic? Maybe, but it shouldn't. Remember the setting of Deuteronomy is forty years after the great Exodus. All the adults from that time are deceased, save Joshua and Caleb. Moses speaks to the crowd as if they witnessed all these things personally. Most of his audience was under the age of forty and was born in the wilderness! Was Moses old and unaware of this reality? I don't think so.

This example teaches us to enter these ancient stories. The stories of God's ancient people are our own. When we participate in the Eucharist, we relive the Last Supper of Jesus and His disciples. At the same time, we anticipate the great banquet table of heaven. Through the timelessness of God, these stories are our stories.

We believe that God is active in our lives today. There have been long stretches in my life where God's hand was hard to see. Hindsight is 20/20. It feels much safer to attribute certain twists and turns to the hand of God once we find ourselves in a Promised Land situation. When we are roaming in the wilderness of life's hard times, it may seem silly, ridiculous, or even dangerous to attribute certain events to the hand of God. My great hope for you is that there are moments in the darkness when you sense the presence of God. The story of God sustaining us from day to day is just as important, and indeed more common, than the stories of dramatic appearances and personal triumph.

Remember how the Shema begins, "Hear, O, Israel, the LORD our God, the Lord is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:4-6 NIV) The Shema is popular sermon fodder for child focused Sunday services because of what comes next. However, impressing something meaningful on the next generation starts with us. Before we call our children to the mountain of God, we must go there ourselves. Do we want our children to gain anything from us for their faith journey? First, something must be in us for them to sense and see.

I know what you are thinking: "He just went from preaching to meddling." Do not worry, that last paragraph is short because it was making me sweat, too. Guilt and shame are public enemy number one for parents. I am not here to heap those burning coals on your head. When you became a parent, someone snuck those embers into the diaper bag you carried out of the hospital. Every mistake that just popped into your mind fanned the flame of guilt. Maybe the well-meaning person who put this book in your hand stoked that fire. Has this book been collecting dust on your shelf or nightstand for a while? No doubt you wiped off the dust of shame and guilt when you picked it up a few minutes ago.

I have read extensively about the role of parents in passing faith to their children. What I wrote above felt like bad news, but all research points to this good news. It is not about perfection but direction, and you can change that direction today. Let's make today the first day in a new phase in our lives as children of God.

Moses returned to Egypt at age 80 with lots of baggage. His work as the leader of God's children started with a flare: ten plagues, parting the Red Sea, and stone tablets with the God's handwritten Ten Commandments. This leadership high was short-lived. Soon the glory was replaced by golden calves. Ten out of twelve hand selected spies professed that the people of the land could not be conquered. Only Joshua and Caleb had faith that God would provide a way. Let me do the math. The batting average of faith among these top prospects was under seventeen percent. That is not good even in baseball!

As a parent, can you relate to Moses as his mountain tops transition into valleys? Are there times when you swing and miss? Have you walked back to the dugout after a called third strike crossed the center of the plate? We all miss golden opportunities!

Do you know what the title "Deuteronomy" means? "Second law." The identifying characteristic of the entire book is God giving a second chance. God calls Moses and His people to receive and pass on the faith once again. We are not required to wait forty years for our second chance; it starts today. We begin by being reminded of where we fit in God's story. Our first place in this story is as the progeny of faithful others.

Do you need inspiration to start, or restart, this journey of faithful parenting? Take some time to remember and reflect on the Moses characters in your life. Who were the adults or peers that inspired you as a child to begin your faith journey?

Discussion Guide

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,
let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,
and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.
(Hebrews 12:1 NIV)

1. Today we focus on our first role as recipients of the faith. The great cloud of witnesses has inspired many a sermon and warmed many a struggling heart. The author of Hebrews has just reminded his readers of the heroes of faith from the Old Testament. Those characters are inspirational to us, but so are those people of faith in our own story. Take a few moments to name your cloud. Who are the people who shaped your life and pointed you toward faith in Jesus?
2. The great and powerful Wizard of Oz was not so impressive once Dorothy peaked behind the curtain. One factor that leads us to defeated thoughts as parents is the way we compare ourselves, with full awareness of all our struggles and failings, to the heroes of our childhood who seemed impervious to struggle. My goal is not to participate in cancel culture and ruin the images of our heroes, but to recognize their humanity is good for our sanity. What questions would you like to ask the people in your cloud? Make a list.
3. **Formative Challenge:** Have a conversation with one or more of the heroes of faith in your cloud. You can choose the mode of communication that seems most appropriate. Is there a living member of the cloud with whom you feel comfortable entering this conversation? If so, make an appointment with them, share with them your goals of becoming a better example for your children and let them know they inspired you. If a live conversation is not possible or comfortable, enter into an imaginative conversation with one or more of your cloud members. Ask them some questions and allow time for them to answer.
4. Keep reciting the Shema as part of your daily disciplines. Find a spot to post it on your bathroom mirror, in the car, or on the kitchen refrigerator.

Chapter 4

Between Tadpole and Frog

In the guitar shop I learned that all pieces of wood are not the same. The ease of working with a piece of wood changes with time and proper treatment. You can't just chop down a tree and start cutting and carving it into a guitar. Poor preparation of the wood leads to guitars that look good, but do not age well.

Like aging wood, children change over time. Their needs, wants, and abilities are moving targets as they develop. My work as a children's minister gave me experiences with learners from birth through sixth grade. Each week could bring a wide range of interactions. On Sunday, I led a worship experience for kindergarten through second grade and taught a class for fifth and sixth graders. Then on Wednesday night I would teach a group of preschoolers. It turns out that each of these groups is different, and that difference is more than skin deep.

The focus of this book is to help parents create memorable experiences, encourage meaningful dialogue, and develop formative relationships with their pre-teen children. Our focus will be middle school, ten- to twelve-year old students. The middle years are difficult for us as adults because the state of our children is best defined as in-between. We can see that they are not frogs, but they no longer look like tadpoles. These kids are somewhere in the middle. We watch them interact with adults in public, and our hearts warm as we see signs of maturity. Later that day we watch them interact with peers and recognize the immaturity that persists. Preteens are consistently inconsistent.

As we watch in confusion, we ask ourselves, "What's going on in there?" We are not the first to ask those questions, nor will we be the last. In this chapter, we will explore the findings of three researchers who have committed their lives to studying and describing human development. In particular, we will look at the work of Piaget, Erikson, and Fowler.

First, a word of caution: if you are a person who just wants to know what to do, this chapter may not be your favorite. If you want to skip to the application chapters, no one will blame you. Those who are curious about the inner workings of children will want to keep reading. Anyone who desires to understand the logic behind the practical advice will find this chapter foundational.

Remember, the goal of discussing these theories is not to find boxes into which we can lump our children. These descriptions help us recognize their growth and development. We are witnesses to this process as we interact and discuss life with our children. You could study any one of these theories in much greater detail in other works. This is a brief overview of multiple theories. We are seeking guidance and insights into the most important practices at this pre-teen age. Developmental

psychology is a field I have explored over the past decade. This field informs our understanding of the young hearts we desire to shape and form. The findings of this chapter informed the choices of the application chapters to come in the third section.

Piaget and Cognitive Development

You might recognize the name Jean Piaget from a general psychology course. Piaget was one of the first modern psychologists to develop a framework of child development. His focus was on cognitive aspects, how children think at various ages. His theory states that infants learn through their senses and movement, which we see as we watch them touch and taste everything. When babies hear, see, or smell something, it attracts their interest. They learn to perform tasks by repetitive efforts. This is a stage of stimulus and response.

In the next stage, children learn to use symbols that stand for things. They connect the word “dog” to fuzzy, four-legged creatures that are larger than cats and behave in certain ways. According to Piaget, these children do not draw logical conclusions or build arguments. Their memories are amazing, but their understanding is limited. Piaget applies these observations to years two through seven.

According to the theory, children enter a phase of simple logic during years seven to eleven. He calls this stage concrete operations. Operations refer to the process of reasoning. For Piaget, concrete stands in contrast to abstract. Let me give an example. In this stage a child would have a hard time explaining an abstract term like justice. Yet, if you told a story about one child knocking another one down on the playground, a child could tell you the correct way to respond. They would know that it was right to help the child up and apologize for knocking them down. One of the greatest pieces of understanding I have gained regarding this phase is that stories are “concrete.” Children can understand and internalize the meaning and teaching of the story. Though they cannot produce a one sentence “moral of the story,” they will recall and apply the story in a related circumstance.

Preteens are crossing the bridge from concrete to abstract thinking. Piaget labels this next step formal operations. Around age eleven, children develop the ability to think abstractly. They can imagine a hypothetical situation and discuss the possible outcomes of various choices. Children make this big step in fits and starts. Not all children make this jump at the same rate or with the same ease, but we do want to help them through this process. When we want to teach our children at this age, it is important that we start with the concrete. If we tell the story well, they will intuitively understand its meaning. We want to encourage discussion about the meaning to help them internalize and generalize the learning. But even now, abstract discussion is the second step.

Erikson and Psychosocial Development

We live in an age that values transparency. Therefore, I admit that Erikson has influenced my thinking on forming children more than Piaget. As Catherine Stonehouse deduces from Piaget's work, children are more like adults in their feelings than their thinking.¹ Erikson points us to the social feelings that children experience as they grow through his stages. Erikson describes the stages of psychosocial development as a series of challenges to conquer. This research extends throughout the lifecycle and will be referenced again in one of the application chapters. At this time, we will discuss the only two challenges that impact this age group.

The challenge Erikson attributes to 6–12-year-olds focuses on industry vs. inferiority. Children of this age are eager to be productive. They take pride in completing a task and contributing to the community. Preteens connect to the community by working alongside adults to accomplish meaningful tasks. Do you want to alienate a twelve-year old? Trivialize their work or dismiss their efforts, and they will know you don't value them. If you patronize and assign more value to their work than they know it is worth, you will lose their trust. Preteens need to feel competent to have a sense of belonging within the social group. Just to be clear, your local church and the church universal, are primary social groups to which we want them to connect. This is the heart of Erikson's fourth stage.

This stage gives way to the challenge of identity vs. role confusion with the onset of puberty. This is the primary task of the teen years. Teens are hyper-aware of how others perceive them. They desire to apply the skills they have developed to find a productive place in society.² In this stage social affirmation is vital. Ceremonies that confirm a child's place in the community are impactful.

Applying Erikson's work to current trends in American Christianity compels me to make the following point. Assigning our children to spectator roles is not conducive to drawing our children into the community of God. A preteen must contribute to the work of the institution. Perceiving a role in the group is key for a teenager to persist in it. Erikson's observations must inform our future practices.

Fowler and Faith Development

James Fowler stands on the shoulders of Piaget, Erikson, and others to build his theory of faith development. Fowler's second stage encompasses 10–12-year-olds. In simple terms, when children in this stage listen to stories, they discern the embedded message. During this stage children gain the ability to create their own stories that carry meaning. Students are drawn to stories that deliver historical facts and backgrounds about their family or community. Along with Piaget, Fowler recognizes that children are not ready to draw the abstract meaning out of the story, yet they grasp it in a concrete, literal way. Fowler recognizes that our sacred stories carry much weight for preteens.

Narratives communicate to them both our mission and ethics. Preteens innately grasp the missional and ethical implications of our stories. Yet, they still struggle to explain those values in abstract terms.

In this stage, children develop the ability to consider the perspectives of others. They develop a perception of God as an independent human-like being capable of compassion and empathy.³ As they begin to see the world through the eyes of others, they begin to imagine how God looks at them. Children in this state connect deeply with “symbolic and dramatic” materials. They can retell the stories presented to them in thorough detail.⁴

Fowler’s third stage typically emerges with adolescence and continues through the teen years. In this stage teens assess and process multiple views and over time develop their own lens for understanding the world. Despite a teen’s willingness to explore and investigate other world views, deference to the beliefs and convictions of their native community remains. Teens desire to conform to the shared identity of their faith community. Unless thoroughly convinced otherwise, they will revert to the traditional commitments of their group.⁵

Summary

In this chapter we have explored the work of Piaget, Erikson, and Fowler. These scholars have given us insights into the progressive stages of development of a child’s thinking, social connections, and growing faith. We briefly discussed preteen stages and peeked ahead at their thoughts about the teen years. The key works of these authors, along with some texts that provide intermediate explanations, are in the suggested reading below.

As we move forward, I want to pay special attention to three concepts from this chapter.

1. Preteens are in the process of moving from concrete to abstract thinking. A good story is a vehicle that can carry great meaning for them.
2. Preteens connect with the group by making meaningful contributions. As they move into the teen years, the group to which they belong will set the norms for their behavior and understanding of the world.
3. Preteens connect deeply with stories about their family and community. They are just beginning to recognize how others see the world and to think about how God sees them.

Discussion Guide

1. As you read the section on Piaget, were there memories of your child at different stages of development? Do you remember your child exploring everything with hands and mouth as infants? What funny stories can you recount as you think about language development and your child's attempts to connect words with actual things?
2. Erikson tells us that our children become a part of the group by sensing the value of their contributions to the group. How is your child making meaningful contributions to the family and the church? Is this a strength or weakness at the moment? Brainstorm ways that your child can make more meaningful contributions.
3. Fowler emphasizes the power of stories in communicating important matters to preteens. Reflect on the stories that formed you as a child. Is there a story that periodically surfaces in your mind when you are in certain situations? How have stories carried meaning through your own life?
4. **Formative Challenge:** We are learning to comprehend that children are not just little adults. However, we find it difficult to name what preteens are as we observe their existence somewhere between tadpole and frog. Reflect in your journal or discuss with a small group of trusted parents what you recognized in your own child as you read this chapter. What new graces are you asking over yourself and your child in light of these reflections?

Suggested Readings

Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1993.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. Rev. ed. HarperOne, 1995.

Henley, Karyn. *Child-Sensitive Teaching: Helping Children Grow a Living Faith in a Loving God*. 4th ed. Nashville, TN: Child Sensitive Communication, 2011.

Piaget, Jean, and Barbel Inhelder. *The Psychology of The Child*. 2nd ed. New York: Basic Books, 1969.

*Stonehouse, Catherine. *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998.

*Catherine Stonehouse devotes one chapter each to the work of Erikson, Fowler, and Piaget. Additionally, she spends a chapter on Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Her work is a great bridge between this simple introduction and the original works of these theorists.

Chapter 8

Celebrating Christian Holidays

In Deuteronomy we read, “When your children ask you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the Lord our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your children, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.’” (Deuteronomy 6:20-21) This passage may seem odd to you. Do your children regularly ask such well-formed questions about God at the dinner table? Probably not. In this text, Moses is referencing a specific holiday celebration. This passage provides insight into family life in Old Testament times.

God instituted the Passover celebration at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. The observation of this holiday persists today. The Passover meal includes specific foods used to recount the Exodus story for the entire family. A scripted conversation is re-experienced as generations of Jewish families gather at the table. The script guides the children to ask questions. The question that started this chapter is part of that ancient script.

The sixteenth chapter of Deuteronomy gives a brief description of three holidays for God's people. Annual observances include the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Booths. I am not advocating for 21st century Christians to return to these particular festivals. I shine light on them because something clicked in me when I read these passages as a parent.

What clicked? Holidays exist to retell the stories that give identity to a group of people. God instituted them to keep formative stories alive in the group memory. I was in the middle of seminary when my oldest daughter was in second grade. I noticed something as she took part in a Memorial Day performance at her school. I realized that her patriotic school play was a retelling of American value stories. The songs they sang trace back to the birth of our nation. The stories retold about our beloved early leaders conveyed significant American values. What a masterful example of culture building! This brought me clarity regarding the purpose and intent of holiday celebrations.

Christian holidays build culture. They pass foundational faith stories to our children. Celebrations provide multi-sensory experiences that engrain the story of Jesus into our being. When I was growing up, my church did not make room for the spiritual side of the holidays. However, we often visited my grandmother’s church for Christmas and Easter events. I remember the smells of the Saturday morning breakfast that preceded the Easter Egg Hunt. Random bits of Christmas dramas and special music flash through my head as I reflect on those celebrations. I am reminded of those dark, cold nights that bountiful candlelight, joyful hymns, and warm greetings brightened.

From the early days of family life, my wife and I committed to provide our children meaningful holiday experiences. Some of our practices have been consistent over the years. Our family traditions continue to grow as we learn new ways to celebrate. We are not here to judge your past family and church related holiday celebrations. We should look back at previous holidays for reflection and evaluation of our own practices. But today is a new day, a day to turn over a new leaf or to expand and refine past practices.

Let me address one significant issue before we get into suggested practices. Author Katherine Yust helped me recognize that American Christians participate in two holidays.¹ Of course, we observe the Christmas of the church starring baby Jesus. Also, we observe the American cultural version of Christmas starring Santa Claus. The same is true of the Easter bunny, Cadbury eggs, and the resurrected Christ at Easter. Balancing these concurrent holidays is an interesting dance for us as Christian parents in America. The two versions are deeply intertwined and cannot be totally separated. Moving forward, my focus will be on making the most of the religious side of the holidays. The practice of the cultural side will look different for each of us. My advice as you work this out in your family is simple. Enjoy the cultural observances that are important in your home. Just make sure that the formative religious aspects of the holidays are not overpowered or ignored.

Lent and Easter

Easter is the most heavily attended church service of the year at every church in America. Churches often set out extra chairs or plan extra services to accommodate the influx of congregants. Easter Sunday is a time to celebrate the morning Jesus' first followers found the tomb empty. The resurrection of Jesus is the most pivotal moment in our history. Experiencing these joyous Easter Sunday services is a must. This experience of jubilation becomes more powerful with some preparation during the season of Lent.

It takes more than a powerful ending to create a great story. Conflict, rising tension, and anticipation build the storyline. A good set-up prepares us for greater impact when the plot twists. The season of Lent provides that preparation for the celebration of resurrection. For the Christian, Lent is a time of fasting. It is a time in which we give up something as a reminder of the sacrifice Jesus made for us. There is no resurrection without the cross.

Participating in Lent is a great way for our children to take ownership of their faith. It is also a great way to learn about fasting. Fasting is a formative practice not an experience of retribution. Fasting is not punishment to our bodies. Rather, it is training that helps us place our trust in God more than the

material things we run to for comfort. It is a practice that helps us recognize unhealthy addictions as well. What might we give up for a period of six weeks? Candy, dessert, sugary drinks, and caffeinated beverages are often surrendered for a time. In recent years, technology fasting has become a significant option. Such a fast might include video games, television, social media, or other addictive phone apps. This can be a good time to introduce a new positive habit as well. Remember, holidays were made for humans, not the other way around. Each family's observance of Lent will be unique. The goal is to make choices that draw you nearer to God and God's people.

Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, and Good Friday are significant stops on the path to Easter. Ash Wednesday kicks off Lent with a mood of repentance. It is a reminder of our own frailty as humans. Palm Sunday, one week before Easter, recalls Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, and begins Holy Week. Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Special church services provide experiential worship opportunities for these occasions. If your congregation does not hold such services, I encourage you to visit one at a neighboring church. Simply taking time to read and discuss these Bible stories at home is another option. Noticing the flow of events leading up to Easter as a family is a great place to start.

My first experience of the Passover came as part of a Children's ministry course in 2009. Celebrating the Passover became a key tradition for my family. We have celebrated it alone in our home, or with as many as 175 participants from our church and community. I will share links to a couple of Passover scripts at the end of this chapter. It is difficult to put into words the power of an experience like this. Sharing this meal helps us to relive the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples. Additionally, it explains the context and origin story for the Lord's Supper. Recalling what we learned in the developmental theory chapter points us to the power of an experience that is beyond explanation.

Christmas and Advent

My wife is good at throwing parties and making moments special. I am so thankful for her creative ideas and foresight. She had the foresight years ago to make decorating for Christmas a special occasion. I am writing this on the first Saturday in December. This is the day boxes come out of storage, the tree is placed in the living room, and the lights are hung on the porch. We will make traditional snack foods and play Christmas music. My younger children will argue about whose turn it is to put the star on top of the tree. Meanwhile, memories of Christmas past will flood our souls as we record new memories for the future.

I want to be mindful this year of my words. I want to connect the darkness of long December nights with the darkness of a life without God. The lights we hang remind us of the light that came into the world when Jesus arrived at Christmas. The evergreen tree does not fade and lose its leaves like most of the surrounding trees. This reminds us of God's never fading, ever present love for us.

This year my wife added a beautiful, wooden countdown decoration. Each day in December, a wooden angel moves a notch closer to the star-marked stable. As the angel moves along the path she passes wise men and camels along with sheep and their shepherds. At younger stages toy nativity scenes were left scattered on the floor by playful hands. Perhaps this year the nativity will stay put on a shelf, the back of the piano, or the middle of our table.

In the hands of children, nativity scenes imprint the outline of the Christmas story on young hearts. Now is time to explore the experiences of the characters more deeply. Preteens are learning to see the world from the perspective of others. They are developing empathy. Now they can begin to fathom the predicament of Joseph and Mary as they faced an unplanned pregnancy. We can discuss the shock and awe of the shepherds as they came face to face with a host of jubilant angels. We ask what motivated the magi to make the long journey to Bethlehem. We can mourn at the massacre of baby boys that was Herod's response to the news of our coming King. As children become preteens, the presence of the nativity scene is still significant. Symbols and stories carry meaning beyond words for our preteens.

When and where we will have these discussions is the important question. Will you discuss them at the dinner table where a nativity scene serves as a centerpiece? Will you gather around the tree in your living room weekly to read pieces of the Christmas story from Matthew or Luke? Is Christmas Eve the time you will read the account from one of the gospels in its entirety? Perhaps your small group will engage your preteens in some rich dialogue in the month of December. Or your church might share discussion guides for family time at home.

I am a novice when it comes to the Church calendar. My family is learning about the season of Advent. You may want to investigate the traditions of this season with your family. Each week the church lights a new candle. These candles introduce the ideas of hope, peace, joy, and love to prepare the Christian's heart for the coming Messiah. The four weeks of Advent revise the object of our Christmas anticipation. They teach us to anticipate the coming of Christ, as we remember his first coming in Bethlehem. Also, we anticipate the second coming at the end of our life and the end of this age. We think about our readiness to receive Christ's presence.

Does your preteen like to read? If so, a quick online search will reveal many devotional resources for the Advent season. Pick a devotional book or reading plan from a Bible app. Invite your preteen to join you in reading it daily. Perhaps this will inspire some conversations as you read concurrently.

How does your church observe Advent and Christmas? I encourage you to support the spiritually focused programs that are offered by your local church. Are there activities in which your child can participate? If so, encourage that involvement. This is a great season for your child to contribute to the work of the church. Preteens might perform in a Christmas pageant or help prepare younger children to do so. If your own church does not have much planned, don't hesitate to visit a program at another church in town.

Finally, take the time to remind your children that giving truly is greater than receiving. Choose a way to give and support someone who is in need this Christmas. You can do this in any number of ways. Participate in an Angel tree and purchase presents for an underprivileged child in your school or community. Check into international mission groups that provide specific giving options. My children enjoy buying chickens, pigs, or goats for families in third world countries. Take some time to volunteer at a local homeless shelter and actually engage those who are in need. The cold nights of December are an important time to assist those in our communities that live outdoors.

Conclusion

Christmas and Easter provide natural entry points into the most important moments in the life of Jesus. The seasons of Advent and Lent are times of preparation that make the holidays even more significant. Holidays are a great time to share in Bible stories and family stories of past observances. Our preteens grow as they hear and experience the stories that the holidays commemorate. Active participation in church and family traditions leave a lasting impression on the souls in our care.

Discussion Guide

1. Take some time to reflect on your childhood experiences of the holidays. What moments stick out the most in your mind? Is there a moment in your experience of Christmas or Easter that raised your awareness of the presence of God?
2. What do you want your children to take away from their experience of the holidays this year? What traditions do you need to keep, start, or modify this season?
3. **Formative Challenge:** Take some time to look at a Nativity scene. Pick one character and imagine the circumstances that brought him or her into the story. Write your thoughts in a journal, and at a later time share your reflections with your family. For bonus points, challenge your preteen to pick a character and write their own reflection to share with you.

Resource Link:

Several holiday resources, including scripts for small or large group Passover gatherings, can be obtained from my website. <https://impressingthem.wordpress.com/holiday-resources/>

Endnotes

CHAPTER 4

1. Catherine Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 70. Stonehouse, *Joining Children*, 261.
2. Stonehouse, *Joining Children*, 261.
3. Stonehouse, *Joining Children*, 139.
4. Stonehouse, *Joining Children*, 149.
5. Stonehouse, *Joining Children*, 172-173.

CHAPTER 8

1. Yust, Karen Marie. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 32.

Assessment

Benchmark #1: Because my audience consists of parents who have busy schedules - balancing work, church, and home life - it is important that this book is easy for them to read. I will use the tools available on readable.com to evaluate each chapter to make sure that the Flesch-Kincaid Grade level is at or below the 8.0 level and the Flesch Reading Ease score is above 60. Furthermore, each chapter will have a word count between 2,000-2,500 words and the entire book will be 30,000-35,000 words.

Chapter 1 rates as follows: grade level - 5.69, reading ease - 76.37, and word count - 2,001. Chapter 2 scores are: grade level - 6.42, reading ease - 73.04, and word count - 2,126. Chapter 4 rates: grade level - 7.9, reading ease - 62.94, and word count 2,190. Finally, chapter eight satisfies the benchmark as follows: grade level - 7.96, reading ease - 62.83, and word count - 2,389. By the numbers, these four chapters meet the expectation of the first benchmark. It was a challenge to bring the chapter on developmental psychology down to this reading level, but the final product was worth it. For this project to accomplish the primary goal of being easy to read for a busy parent, this goal was necessary and has been accomplished.

Benchmark #2: By May of 2023, the book will be submitted to at least one publisher, ACU Press, for consideration with recommendations from well published authors who are serving as mentors in my writing process. Book proposals will be submitted to at least three additional publishers by December of 2023 if ACU Press does not accept the first proposal. (Baker, IVP, and Wipf & Stock)

Both submissions named in this benchmark are included in the development plan. According to the authors I have consulted with, the showcased chapters and chapter list are sufficient material to make a submission at the appropriate time. The submission to ACU Press will be made before graduation as per this benchmark with the support of two or three mentors who are well known by the publisher.

Benchmark #3: The project will be used by at least one group of parents representing at least four households by the end of 2023. The book will be used by four more such groups by the end of 2024. By the end of 2025, the book will have been used in at least five different local church bodies.

Due to an unplanned professional transition, it seemed as if this benchmark would be a challenge reach. However, as my local church affiliation is coming into focus, it should not be difficult to fulfill. The launch plan includes using the first half of the project for a six-to-eight-week class for parents in the fall of 2023. In the spring of 2024, the second half of the book will be presented in a similar format. The biggest challenge will be finding ministry leaders in different settings who are interested in using my material for a class in their congregation. Another option would be to present the material in a seminar or workshop setting in other churches. A final possibility would be using a video conferencing app to lead a class for parents in different locations for six weekly sessions. I will be

pursuing each of these options in earnest this spring. In order to fulfill this benchmark, I plan to pursue opportunities with my project peer group and with ministers I know from other congregations in my hometown.

Benchmark #4: Each chapter will conclude with discussion questions and spiritual practice. Chapters in Section 2 will include recommended readings for deeper study. Chapters in Section 3 will include recommended resources to aid in the implementation of proposed practices. These Practices and discussion questions will be tested in a beta group to confirm their viability and productivity. This end matter will be included in the 2,000-2,500-word count for the chapter.

All four showcased chapters conclude with three or four discussion questions and include a spiritual practice that can easily be performed. These questions have received positive feedback from the readers I have surveyed. Several praised the inclusion of the spiritual practice as a helpful piece of the project. The quality of the discussion questions and viability of the spiritual practices will be revealed more fully in the fall when used in a class setting. If the questions do not inspire good conversation, then adaptations will need to be made. Feedback from class participants will reveal if the practices are realistic for parents to perform, and will give insights into the impact of the practices. The impact of the project hinges on application, and the discussion guide will be an essential bridge from reading to application.

Chapter 4 from Section 2 of the project includes several texts as suggested readings for the reader who is interested in learning more deeply about the material I introduce. Identifying these texts will be very natural for these chapters, as the list will essentially include the books that have introduced and informed my knowledge of the content. In the one showcased chapter from this section the benchmark is met.

Chapter 8 is the showcased chapter from Section 3. I have included a link to several resources on my personal website for this chapter. Satisfying this benchmark for the application chapters will be one of the more time-consuming details for completing this project. Meeting this benchmark is an essential step to making this book a useful companion for parents who are seeking to spiritually form their preteen children. The text of these chapters will inform and inspire parents. The resources listed at the end of each chapter will equip parents to carry out the work that the chapter challenges them to do.

Project Launch Plan

Doctoral Project Description

The NPO that this project addresses is as follows: Christian parents in today's culture need resources and training to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith. To address this NPO, my project is the production of a book for the audience of Christian parents and lay ministers regarding a vision for the spiritual and faith formation of children. This vision is one that emphasizes the role of parents in the lives of their children. The book will address real life challenges that parents face regarding demands on their time, societal expectations, and any lack of confidence and ownership in their own faith and role in the formation process for their children.

Audience

The audience for this project is Christian parents of preteen children. Ideally, parents would read this book in community with other parents connected through a Sunday school class or small group; however, it is also suitable for parents to read independently.

Development Plan

- May 2023 – Submit book proposal to ACU Press, write draft of Chapter 5
- June 2023 – Pursue feedback and revise Chapter 5, write draft of Chapter 6
- July 2023 – Pursue feedback and revise Chapter 6, write draft of Chapter 7
- August 2023 – Pursue feedback and revise chapter 7, write draft of chapter 9
- September 2023 – Pursue feedback and revise Chapter 9, write draft of Chapter 10
- September/October 2023 – Use chapters 1-2, 4-8 for a class with parents in my local church
- October 2023 – Submit additional book proposals to Baker, IVP and Wipf & Stock
- October 2023 – Pursue feedback and revise Chapter 10, write draft of Chapter 11
- November 2023 – Pursue feedback and revise Chapter 11, write draft of Chapter 12
- December 2023 – Reread all chapters, reflect on the whole work. Evaluate what is good, what is missing, what content needs to be further supported.
- January 2024 – Pursue feedback and revise Chapter 12, write draft of Chapter 13 and Chapter 3.

- February 2024 – Pursue feedback and revise chapters 13 and 3
- March 2024 – Reach out to ministers locally and around the country who may want to use my project to teach a class for parents in their local church, or host a seminar in which I could share the material in a weekend format
- March/April 2024 – Use chapters 3, 9-13 for a class with parents at my local church
- May 2024 – If publishers have not responded positively to my book proposal, pursue other publishing options
- September 2024 – Project being used in multiple churches as a guide for a class that helps prepare, equip, and motivate parents of preteens to spiritually form their children

Development Process

As indicated in the timeline above, each chapter will be passed through an iterative process. The initial chapter draft will be within the 2,000 – 2,500-word count. Feedback will then be attained via Google Form responses from three to five readers. After adapting the draft to incorporate the feedback of readers, I will use the tools on readable.com to improve the readability and assure that the Flesch-Kincaid Grade level is at or below the 8.0 level and the Flesch Reading Ease score is above 60.

Two expert readers will give important professional feedback. First, my mentor who is a recently retired professor and author of many adult Sunday school books will read each chapter with an eye for clarity and accessibility. Then, my mentor in children's spirituality will read each chapter to consider the scope and sequence of the entire work and help identify any content that needs to be added or revised.

The use of this material in a parent class will allow for an additional iterative step. I will be the first teacher to present the material, so I will be able to assess the quality of conversations that are inspired by the text and discussion guides. Class participants will give feedback regarding their satisfaction with the material. Engagement with a class of parents will help identify topics that might need to be developed further or added in additional chapters.

Sharing the project with other ministry leaders for use in their congregation will allow for an additional level of feedback. During this phase, I will be in touch weekly with those leaders as they teach the course. I will seek feedback from them that will help make the project a more usable tool for other churches.

Finally, as the book form of this project is solidified, the content will be adapted into a workshop or seminar format. Furthermore, the application chapters in section 3 of this book will reveal some areas that need additional resources. This project will provide a blueprint for my next decade of work in the field of child and family ministry.

Appendix A– Milestone 1 The NPO Charter

PERSONAL RESEARCH MANIFESTO

As I become a researcher, I will refuse to act upon present assumptions and patiently work the plan of discernment continually adding more data, prayer, and reflection to the mix.

NPO STATEMENT

Parents at the Collegeside Church of Christ find it challenging to talk with their early middle school children about matters of God and faith.

NPO SCOPE AND CONSTRAINTS

This NPO will address the need for increased parent-child dialogue in the faith formation process for families of preteens at the Collegeside Church of Christ. Particularly this research will focus on two end goals. First, it will gather insights for parents who need motivation, techniques, and best practices, for conversing with their preteen children about God and faith. Secondly, the research will explore ministry models that create environments in which parent and child are involved together in spiritually formative experiences. The outcome being pursued will include parental training in preparation for a family and/or intergenerational ministry experience.

NPO CONTEXT

The context for this NPO research and eventual project is limited to the Collegeside Church of Christ in Cookeville, TN. Collegeside is a congregation that has been in existence since 1963, or nearly 60 years. Cookeville is a rural community with a county population of approximately 70,000. Despite the rural setting, the church is located near the campus of Tennessee Tech University, and the membership is predominantly college educated, white, middle class. Cookeville is a conservative community that prides itself in being the buckle of the Bible Belt. The congregation has an average attendance around 700 people, which includes just over 100 children 6th grade and younger on a given Sunday. Demographically, Collegeside is younger than most churches due to a large college population and a large number of young families. This NPO focuses primarily on Collegeside's 5th and 6th grade students and their parents.

ROOT CAUSES

Three root causes surfaced in the Discovery Workshop: time, the parent's relationship with God, and parental confidence. Family time is minimized by the busy schedules that families keep. Parents are often taking children to organized events such as athletics, lessons, school or even church activities. Very little unclaimed, unstructured time exists in the family schedule.

This lack of time feeds into the next struggle which is the parent's personal relationship with God. Parents are not taking the time they need to be alone with God and address their own spiritual needs. This leads to the third root cause which is a lack of confidence in parents to address spiritual issues with their own children.

Additionally, one on one interviews pointed out that the church is not presenting parents and children with opportunities to share spiritual time together. Nearly all spiritual interactions designed and promoted by the church are age segregated.

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDERS

1. Mother of a 6th grade boy and teen girls whose husband is not active in church.
2. Mother of 6th grade and 8th grade girls. Relatively new member who moved to town three years ago. Family is struggling to make deep connections with the church family.
3. Mother of 5th grade girl, teen girl, younger boys. Entire family is very involved in church life.
4. Father of a grown son and active observer of young families in our congregation. Highly involved in this church family for 45 years.
5. Mother of a 5th grade son and younger daughter. Family is moderately involved in church life.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

1. Collegeside Church elder and pediatrician.
2. Professor of Children's Spirituality at Church of Christ affiliated university
3. Professor, Author, and Education Director in the Lutheran Church

KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 "The Shema"

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on 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.

Psalm 127

Unless the Lord builds the house,
the builders labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.
In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat—
for he grants sleep to those he loves.

Children are a heritage from the Lord,
offspring a reward from him.
Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.
Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.
They will not be put to shame
when they contend with their opponents in court.

Deuteronomy 5:16 "The 5th Commandment"

Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 6:20-21

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" Tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand."

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

A deeper understanding of the preteen child will be gained through key texts in developmental Psychology starting with Piaget, Erikson, and Fowler. Additionally, an understanding of the spirit of the child will be pursued through Robert Coles, Lisa Miller, David Hay and Rebecca Nye. Parent-child conversational research will begin with Boyatzis and Chesto. Seeking insight to faith transmission in families, I will delve into Bengston, Lanker, McKnight and Goodman. I will seek applied knowledge of family/intergenerational ministry models through the work of Allen, McCoy, Roberto, Okholm and others. Additionally, I am seeking access to the research documents created by Fuller Youth Institute.

APPENDIX A

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP AND ONE ON ONE INTERVIEWS

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The discovery workshop consisted of five stakeholder participants including four parents of 10-12 year olds. Additionally, these parents have a mixture of older and younger children ranging from three to eighteen years. One senior adult who is very involved with young families in the congregation also participated. We met on a Saturday morning for a three hour in-person workshop.

The goal of the workshop was to identify and articulate the boundaries of my primary audience, gain a better understanding of my Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) affecting the primary audience, identify potential root causes of the NPO, and determine how a solution would impact the audience. We followed a series of group brainstorming exercises using post-it notes, flip charts, and a whiteboard. I served as a neutral facilitator of this brainstorming process by posting key questions and gently prodding for further explanation as I sought to understand the thought processes of the participants.

Group norms were set encouraging all participants to share their perspectives and to respect the views and confidentiality of all participants. After a brief introduction and icebreaker, we proceeded with the planned activities. Exercises included the presentation of preplanned questions on large Post-its. Participants responded to each question by individually writing their answer on Post-it notes at their table then posting on the wall. Then, participants reviewed the collection of responses identifying patterns and insights that surfaced. The workshop was documented by my personal notes and photos of the flip charts filled with Post-it note responses and written comments.

DISCOVERY STATEMENT

"Considering that our audience consists of both parents and children, we have discovered that parents need tools and resources to talk to their kids about God and faith. The parent's own relationship with God, the parent's lack of confidence and feelings of insecurity, and the absence of unscheduled time were identified as the root causes of this NPO. The desire to address this need is based upon the belief that it could improve parental confidence, parent-child relationships, parent-God and child-God relationships. Ultimately, it is believed that increasing the amount of dialogue between parents and children about God and faith will improve all relationships in which the child and/or parent engage."

CRITICAL INSIGHTS FROM DISCOVERY WORKSHOP

Of primary importance was the confirmation that the proposed NPO was indeed significant to the stakeholders. The proposal of the NPO cut through any pretensions and led to a very open, honest, and heartfelt discussion. Parents feel guilty regarding their lack of conversation with kids about God and want to address the problem. Three significant obstacles surfaced in the group and were acknowledged by all participants: spiritual health of the parent, parental confidence, and a lack of available family time.

Parents recognize that any ultimate solution will involve parents and children being together, however, the discussion of how to remedy the problem centered on training and equipping the parents. Parents expressed the need for a mentor or peer community that would provide support and encouragement. Finally, any tool will establish designated times for parent-child dialogue and produce intentional, relevant conversations. Parents believe that successfully addressing this NPO will comprehensively improve parent-child relationships.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW DISCOVERIES

Interviews support the idea that parents lack the confidence to have important conversations with their children. A recurring theme in the interviews was that the preteen age is a very important time for open parent-child communication, however, the seeds of communication and dialogue are best planted at an earlier age. Part of this dialogue development pertains to the asking of deeper, empathy-inspiring questions when talking about Bible stories with preschool and early elementary children. Additionally, the value of all (not just religious) parent-child conversations should be noted.

Another important revelation is the role of other adults. Sometimes other parents will connect with a child more easily. Also, the presence of older adults can serve to facilitate discussions between parents and children. The confirming voice of another adult helps validate the position that a parent takes. Additionally, children sometimes feel more free to express undeveloped or extremist ideas to non-parent adults.

SYNTHESIS

All parties agree that parents find it difficult to speak with their preteen children about matters of God and faith. Parents settled on three root causes that they recognize: lack of parental confidence, underdevelopment of the spiritual life of parents, and the absence of free family time due to too many commitments. Interviewees agreed with these root causes, bringing us to the question of addressing these causes toward the end of resolving the NPO.

Parents said that the tool should address both the parent and child, but their discussion focused heavily on the need for parental training. Interviewees agreed that training for parents would be a piece of the solution, but one in particular pointed out that dialogue can only happen when parents and children are together. Additionally, it was recognized that other adults involved in the conversation can serve as mentors for parents and provide reassuring and affirming feedback to the children.

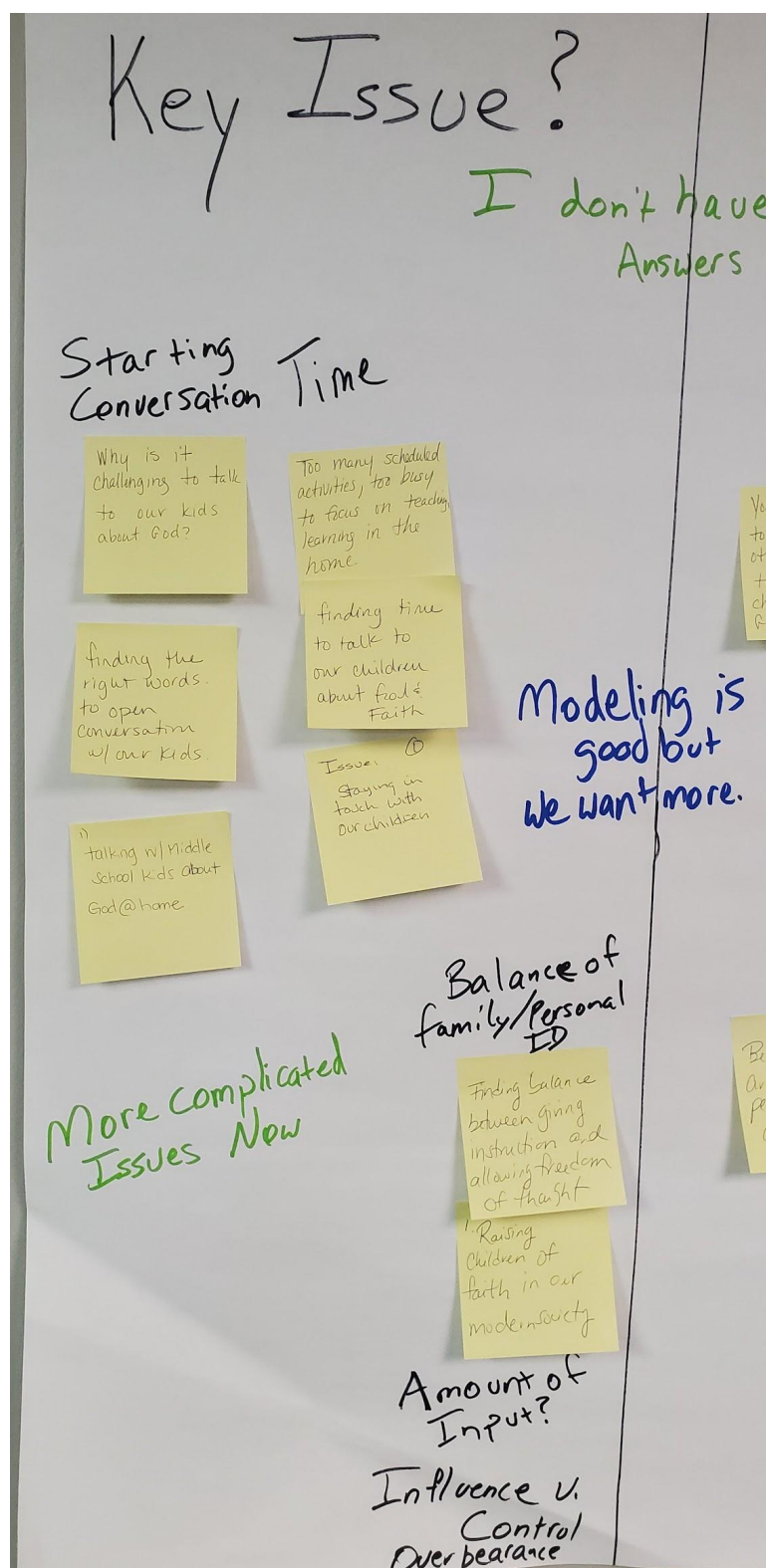
The perceived benefit of having parents and children in meaningful conversations about God leads to the conclusion that the Collegeside church should consider programming options that provide training to parents in preparation for designed, intergenerational, spiritual discussions.

NEXT STEPS

Making the turn toward academic research several pathways of study come to mind. First, is the arena of child development. There are insights to be gained relative to the preteen soul through the lens of cognitive (Piaget), psychosocial (Erikson), or faith (Fowler) development. Additionally, research that speaks to the spiritual dimension of the child is important in this program. Also, I ask what research has been done specifically investigating conversations and dialogue, especially of a spiritual nature, between parents and preteens? These areas of research will be very helpful in crafting a training scenario for parents.

Finally, research regarding ministry models that bring together parents, children, and potentially other generations are going to play an important role. Finding meaningful ways that the church can create a structured ministry with designated times that will foster spiritual growth in both parents and children while inspiring interactions among them is a vital outcome.

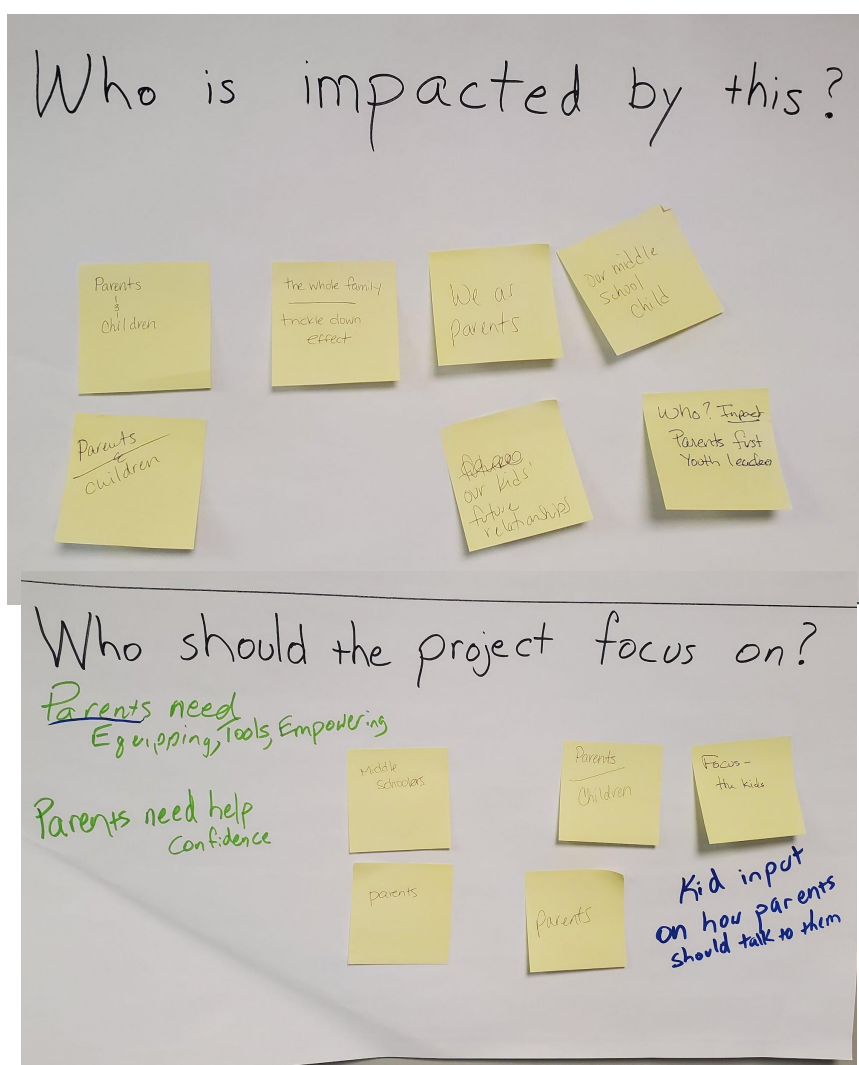
DISCOVERY WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION



Having presented the proposed NPO, we began our session by seeking to identify the key issues. Finding the time and knowing how to start the conversation were very significant obstacles that were named. Parents know that their example is of great importance, but they want to be able to speak about their faith with their children. They are held back by the fear that they don't know all the answers, especially in the changing culture that seems to make important conversations even more complicated. One of the concerns in the back of parents' minds is giving their children room to make their own decisions, yet properly sharing personal convictions that they hold as parents. Parents fear being controlling and overbearing, but they do desire to influence their children.

Parents believe that they play an important role in the faith development of their children. They agree that the teaching of the church, Sunday School, and youth group have a positive impact, but it just is not enough. Children need their parents to speak into their spiritual lives.

Parents view their children as independent beings, but they know that children crave connection, especially to them as parents. The faith of children grows best when a strong foundation is laid by parents.

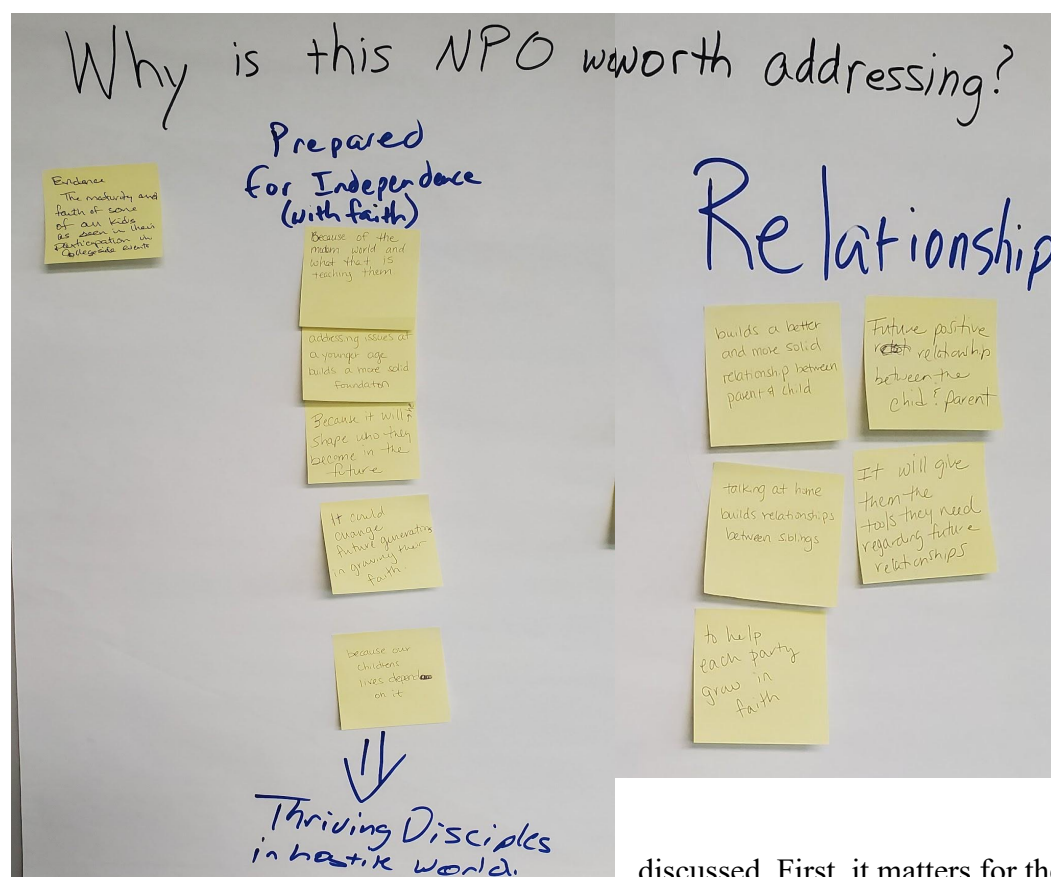


Everyone agreed that both parents and children are impacted by this NPO. Any tool that improves this problem, will bless both the parent and the child.

All participants recognized that parents need to be equipped, given tools, and empowered, to build their confidence for this endeavor. Several suggested that any tool being developed to address this NPO should be designed to bring the child and parent together.

The significance of parents speaking into the spiritual world of children is compounded by many social and cultural factors that are ever present in our world. The influence of friends, peers, teachers, social media, television/movies, are all dangerous

teachers that hold sway over our children. The fast paced culture of sports, hobbies, clubs, and other activities all compete for the time we spend with our children.

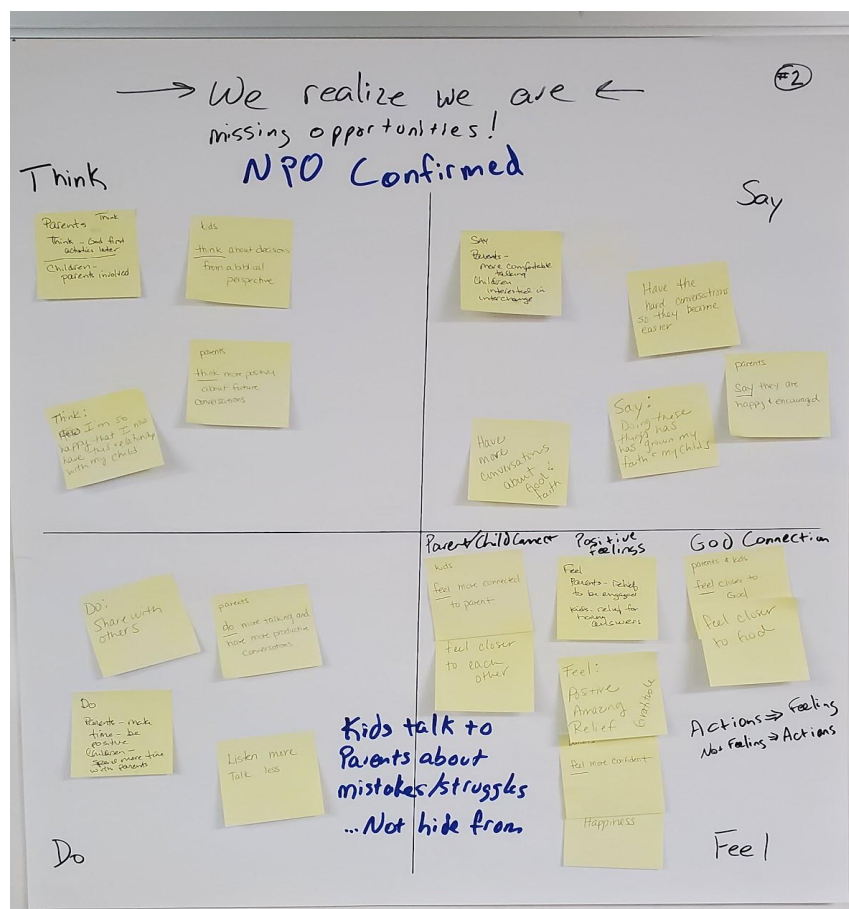


Two primary reasons surfaced when the worthiness of addressing this NPO was

discussed. First, it matters for the development of

our children into thriving disciples of Jesus in a hostile world. Secondly, we are motivated to confront this NPO because we believe it will help nurture healthier relationships within the family. These relationships have lifelong value.

How would our world be different if parents did speak more with their children about God and their faith. How would we think differently? As parents we would be less focused on activities and more focused on parenting our child's spirituality. We would process decisions using



biblical perspective, and we would be more positive in our visions of the future.

Children and parents would both think more positively about the parent child relationship.

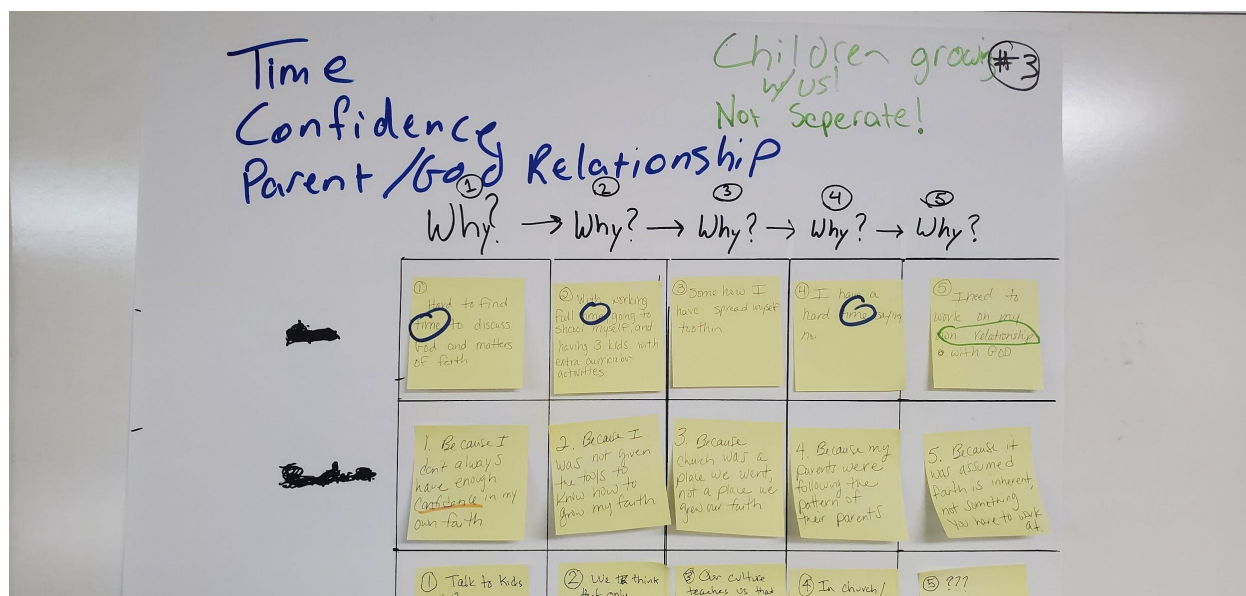
Parents and children would say more to each other recognizing a change in comfort and interest level in their relationship. Parents would say that they are more

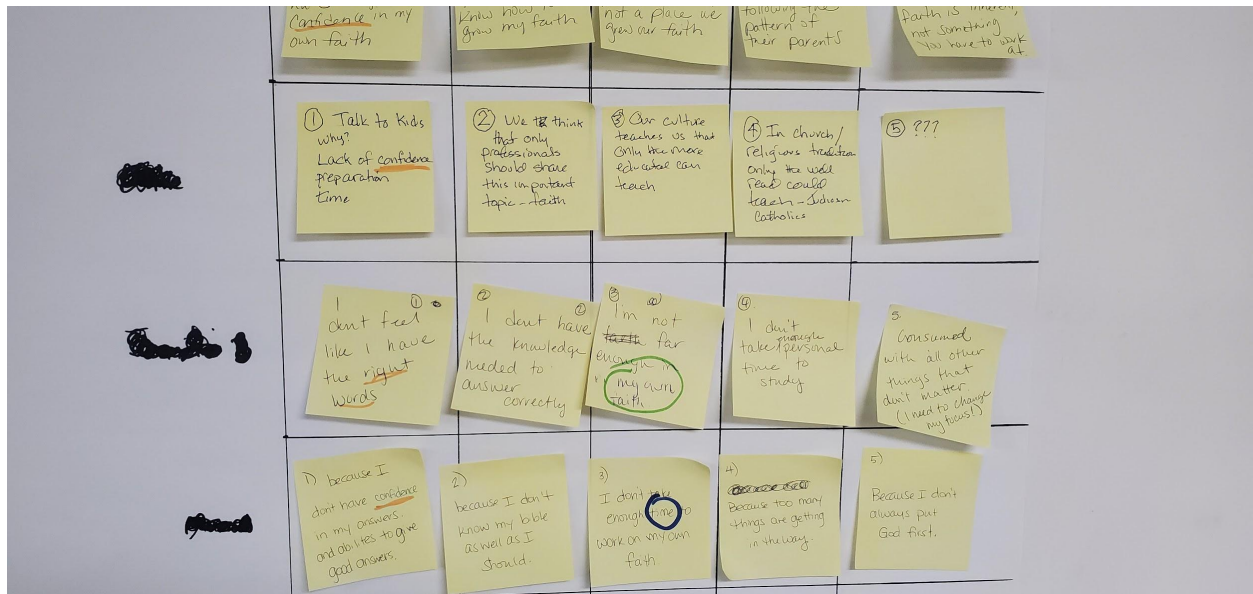
happy and that the conversations they are having with their children are growing the faith of both parent and child.

Successfully addressing this NPO would increase feelings of closeness and connection between the parent and child. Parents especially would feel positive about the successful interactions and more confident in the parenting role. There would be a sense of relief that the parent-child relationship has improved. Moreover, the parent and child would both feel closer to God. Parents tend to believe that a change of actions would impact their personal feelings and esteem, more so than positive feelings have the power to change actions.

Successfully communicating with their own children would inspire parents to share their success and strategies that led to it with other parents. Parents would be involved in more productive conversations with their children. Not only would parents be talking more, but they would also be listening better to their children.

Ultimately, parents realize that they are missing opportunities to discuss God with their children, and this makes them sad. The NPO is clearly validated by this discussion. If this NPO is adequately addressed, then kids will want to talk to parents even about their mistakes and struggles, rather than hiding their shortcomings from them.





Why is it that we as parents have a difficult time speaking with our 10-12 year old children about God? Three connected, but distinct root causes emerged in our discussion. We begin with the matter of time. Parents can't find the time to talk to their children because of hectic schedules and events that continually separate parents and children. Next we see that parents are not confident enough in their own ability and aptitude to delve into spiritual conversations with their children. There is a tendency to believe that great expertise is needed to talk about the things of God with anyone. Finally, we see that perhaps the root cause to the lack of confidence is connected also to the lack of time, because parents struggle to find the time to nurture their own relationship with God. They can't give to their children what they have yet to find for themselves, and they just don't have the time to look.

#4

Workshop Summary

#1
(audience) Considering Parents + Children

#1
(NPO) We've discovered parents need help (tools, resources...)
to talk to their kids about God + faith.

#3
(root cause) Which is caused by Parent/God Relationship
Time, Parent Confidence/Insecurity

#2
(outcome) If solved, it would mean better Kid/Parent relationship
better Relationships w/ God, \Rightarrow better Relationships
in general + parental confidence
Relational + Conversational Snowball.

Workshop Summary:

Considering parents and children (audience), we've discovered parents need help (tools and resources) to talk to their kids about God and faith. This problem is caused by lack of time, struggling parent-God relationships, and a lack of parent confidence. If this NPO were solved, it would mean better parent-child relationships, better relationships with God for parent

and child, increased parental confidence, and an overall increase in conversational dialogue between parents and children.

ONE-PAGE POST-WORKSHOP MESSAGE TO STAKEHOLDERS

Thank you again for your time on Saturday. Your input was invaluable and will go a long way in shaping my project. Let me share what I took away from our conversation.

NPO: “Parents at the Colleside Church of Christ find it challenging to talk with their early middle school children about matters of God and faith.”

Discovery Statement:

“Considering that our audience consists of both parents and children, we have discovered that parents need tools and resources to talk to their kids about God and faith. The parent’s own relationship with God, the parent’s lack of confidence and feelings of insecurity, and the absence of unscheduled time were identified as the root causes of this NPO. The desire to address this need is based upon the belief that it could improve parental confidence, parent-child relationships, parent-God and child-God relationships. Ultimately, it is believed that increasing the amount of dialogue between parents and children about God and faith will improve all relationships in which the child and/or parent engage.”

The following list reflects important aspects of the resource to be developed.

The resource will:

- Address both parent and child, but the emphasis was placed on supporting the parents.
- Include Biblical texts as central.
- Provide the support of a mentor or peer community for parents.
- Establish designated times for parent-child dialogue.
- Produce intentional, relevant conversations between parent and child.

Please let me know if any additional thoughts have come to mind since Saturday, or if you would correct or amend anything in this summary.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW DOCUMENTATION

INTERVIEW WITH PEDIATRICIAN/SHEPHERD

- Pertaining to the challenge of creating conversation: "Are kids this age asking different questions than the answers we are giving them?" With young children we are very fact oriented, memorizing verses and stories. Middle schoolers want to go beyond the explanation, "Because the Bible says so." They need deeper discussions about the why of issues and doctrines.
- They need freedom to talk about big questions? (Creation? Sexual engagement? Homosexuality? War? Abortion?)
- Kids are thinking, "How does the substance of Bible teaching relate to me and my life today?"
- Impact of college interns on youth in Teenside.
- Value of teachers who stay with a group of kids for several years.
- There might be value in a parent training workshop in which positive and negative examples are given for communicating with this age group.
- Question: "Is it easier to mentor other kids rather than your own. Value and ability of other adults to allow kids to express "extremism" of any kind and then discuss the issue calmly and rationally without fear of repercussions for taking the wrong side of the argument.
- How do kids this age view their parents? Are parents the enemy? Do kids think they already know what their parents think, so they don't want to discuss things with them.

Agrees that:

- This issue is a great need, especially at this age since it is a difficult phase. No longer children, not yet adults.
- Parents need examples of how to interact better.
- This is a pivotal age: The path chosen in this age group is often followed through adolescence into early adulthood. (Seen frequently in Celebrate Recovery testimonies.)
 - Seems to be a difference between groups that had positive vs. negative experiences in these middle years.
 - Problems like: family secrets, abusers, adulterers, alcoholics, etc. have a strong negative impact at this time.

Disagree?

- Relationships must begin before this point!

- Many parents who think they have a great relationship at this point end up shocked by later events (kid choices) in the teen years.

What is missing?

- Emphasized value of non-parent, adult mentors at this age (personal experience and observation).
- Kids this age are very internal. Hard to talk about tough issues because of the concern that people will judge me. Kids desire to fit in!
- In-betweenness of 5/6th grade.
- Lack of speaking at this age. (Vocabulary is not keeping up with their emotions.)
- There are “Pied Pipers” that Kids this age are drawn to because of the way they connect. What can we learn from them?

Response to interview with Collegieside Shepherd/Pediatrician:

This conversation tended to veer away from the parent child interaction and toward the direction of other positive influence on the middle school child. Not to diminish the great importance of these other relationships, but the focus of this problem is on parent child interactions. I do take solace in knowing that other adults (including older teens & college students) have a strong positive impact on my children, however parents tend to hold the highest place of influence, and leveraging that relationship is the goal on which this work is focused.

Looking ahead:

- There is value in studying relationship dynamics. What is it that attracts 11 & 12 year olds to certain individuals?
- What are the big questions? What topics to students this age want to dive into?
- How do you structure questions/curriculum/atmosphere to actually foster an environment where free, comfortable dialogue can take place?
- How does the presence of other adults foster or hinder discussion between parents and children?
- Group/family dynamics that foster/hinder discussion.
- How should parents respond to “extremisms” when expressed by children in order to facilitate dialogue rather than cutting it off.

INTERVIEW WITH CHURCH OF CHRIST PROFESSOR

- A primary resource to look in beginning this research is the 1987 PHD Dissertation by Chesto. The FIRE curriculum, a Catholic, intergenerational small group curriculum, came out of her work. The important nugget of wisdom from her work is this, "Parents become more confident with God Talk when they experience conversations about God together."
- Child & Parent together is the answer. Additionally other generations in the room help as well.
- How do you create a comfortable environment for parents and kids to talk? This is the key question for my work!
- Deeper Questions need to be asked all along. At least one question needs to be included in early elementary (even preschool classes) about how someone felt. "How would you have felt in their shoes?" Developing empathy & personal engagement with the story needs to start early.

Disagree with workshop:

- A more holistic approach should be taken (not just more training for parents).
- Intergenerational small groups are the answer. This is the place where parents and children will learn to talk.
- Seeking God together with tools like:
 - Lectio
 - Dwelling in the Word
 - Imaginative Prayer
 - Art response
 - Taking roles and acting out a story (Naaman and the servant)
- Relational dialogue must come naturally. It can't be scripted or wooden. We must create settings in which we share our spiritual hearts.
- Parents are proposing a cognitive answer to a spiritual problem.
- We often seek answers in the cognitive => Just the facts. It is a habit in our tradition and in many other traditions as well.
- We can't pass on what we are not doing.
- We must grow together.

Recommended resources:

- Chesto PHD work

- Robert Coles Spiritual Life of Children
- Lisa Miller The Spiritual Child [6 reasons why we don't talk to children]
- Lacy Bargo Spiritual Conversations with Children; Check also DMin work

RESPONSE TO INTERVIEW:

This interviewee is heavily invested in intergenerational small groups, and to be honest has influenced me greatly on this for years. Her insight regarding how the presence of other generations aides in the dialogue between parents and children rings true in my experience and deserves further consideration. Many benefits are visible in the small group model in light of the root causes and expectations for a tool that came up in the workshop: a time is designated, scripture is naturally at the center, the presence of a third generation provides mentoring for the parents.

LOOKING AHEAD:

The training piece that parents are seeking might come in the form of small group leader training. The resources shared in this interview merit future consideration. Intergenerational small groups should be considered heavily as this research moves toward a project. Training that highlights the value of parent-child-other adult relationships would be a centerpiece to this work. Additionally, based on the interviewee's ideas of "growing together" it would make sense to train parents not just in group leadership, but also in leading spiritual practices such as: lectio divina, dwelling in the word, and Imaginative Prayer. Training in these practices would also address the key obstacles of parent confidence and parent relationship with God.

INTERVIEW WITH LUTHERAN PROFESSOR/AUTHOR/MINISTER

Agrees:

- Workshop results ring true and are hitting on key stuff.
- Parental confidence is definitely a key issue.
- Parents need permission not to have all the answers.
- Emphasized the importance of communication with dads. Personal experience reveals that dads are more insecure and find it harder to admit that they don't know the answer. Psychologically it is more difficult for men to enter the arena where he is not the expert.
- Moms and dads both need support systems, but those may need to be separate since they have dissimilar starting points.

Further observations: (No real disagreements with the workshop summary.)

- Often parents of children this age say things like, "They don't talk to me anymore." My question is this, "Did they really talk to you before?"
- Conversations and questions must be normal. (Not something you turn off and on.) All dialogue is bridge building. It doesn't all have to be about God. Engage in whatever conversation topics your child brings up. They are always testing the waters with conversation starters to see if you care and if your conversations are safe. You must win their trust speaking about "unimportant things," then they will bring important things to you later.
- When adolescents bring up difficult topics or unacceptable positions, parents must have a "poker face". You can't freak out in front of your child if you want to have dialogue and influence. Hold it together until you can talk to a mentor. You can freak out with them, but then they will tell you about a similar experience and you will realize this is most likely a phase or a natural part of the process. Mentorship from a more experienced adult is of great value when the topic scares you.
- "Parenting is a task best done with support." A comfort level within the family and then with grandparent types is very important. In the Lutheran tradition, this is the role of Godparents, a significant adult outside the home who has accepted the assignment of looking out for the wellbeing of the child.
- It always helps when another adult backs up the position that a parent is taking. This could be a Sunday school teacher, another parent, a grandparent (biological or spiritual.)

Final comments:

- Church staff must be careful not to become adversarial with parents. It doesn't help anyone to play the blame game. As ministers, we must come alongside and foster the process for families. We shouldn't act offended when parents don't follow through. We must convince parents that we are on the same team.
- We should trust that parents have the best in mind for their children, even if we disagree with what they think is best.
- Families need help finding time for spiritual things. This piece of family is one of the big stones that must be placed on the bucket first!

Recommended Resources:

- *Being Dad: Father as a Picture of God's Grace*, Dr. Scott Keith
- *Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church*, Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, Brad Griffin
- *Growing With: Every Parents Guide to Helping Teenagers and Young Adults Thrive in Their Faith, Family and Future*, Kara Powell and Steven Argue
- *Adoptive Church (Youth, Family, and Culture): Creating an Environment Where Emerging Generations Belong*, Chap Clark and Steven Argue.
- Vern Bengston (USC Professor) How faith is transmitted , *Families of Faith*

Looking Ahead:

1. Value of mentors and mentoring relationships
2. Value of workshoping parents
3. Seeking understanding of faith transmittal

Appendix B– Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay

SECTION 1: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

GENERATIONAL FAITH TRANSMISSION IN THE BIBLICAL WORLD

Even today Christian worship persists some 2,000 years after the life and death of its esteemed founder. Even more impressively, according to scripture, today's believer is part of a 4,000-year heritage of the people of God, tracing covenant relationship with YHWH back to the times of Abraham. How has this faith been handed down from generation to generation over forty centuries? The New Testament scriptures overtly reveal little about the process of generational faith transmission. Only a blurry image of family spirituality can be painted with the assumption of the child's involvement in the early house church, observation that Paul's household codes esteem children beyond the view of the surrounding culture, and the example of Jesus himself who said, "Let the little children come to me." (Matthew 19:14)

The Jewish scriptures, however, report on two millennia of community spiritual life. In the world of the Israelite described in the Old Testament, the transmission of faith from one generation to the next was vital to survival. One of the repeated travesties recorded in scripture is the failure of subsequent generations to uphold ancestral faith. Covenants were instated and renewed by one generation then renounced, or simply forgotten by the next. Just a few examples would include the cycle in Judges of idolatry, oppression, repentance and deliverance (Judges 2:11-19)¹, the division of the Davidic Kingdom following the death of Solomon (1 Kings 11:34-36), and ultimately the Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles.

The book of Deuteronomy gives more explicit teaching than any other Biblical text to the significance and structure of faithful family life. The role of faith transmission is clearly placed on parents in the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), as they are called to personal devotion and the ministry of impressing God's law on their children by a text that persists as the daily prayer of Jews. Annual holidays are established as occasions for the family to participate in communal remembrances of God's intervention in the earthly fate of God's people (Deuteronomy 16). The laws and customs to be handed down through the generations were expected to generate family conversations about the narrative of God's intervention for the sake of his people. (Deuteronomy 6:20-25) Moses addressed not only the purveying generations, but also the younger generation as the 5th commandment implores children to honor parents so that God's blessing can continue for them. (Deuteronomy 5:16).

¹ William George Smith and Wilbur Fields, *Old Testament History: An Overview of Sacred History and Truth* (Joplin, Mo: College Press Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), 307.

TEXTUAL DISCUSSIONS

GENERATIONAL FAITH TRANSMISSION AS INSTITUTED IN THE BOOK DEUTERONOMY

The narrative setting for the book of Deuteronomy provides understanding for the emphasis that is found within its pages. The book presents the final days of Moses, one of Israel's foundational and formational leaders whose personal and communal life is measured in cycles of faithfulness and infidelity. Moses survived birth in the land of a hostile king then grew up in that very king's palace. His first attempt at alleviating the plight of his people went badly and resulted in four decades of self-exile which would be mirrored by the exiled wandering of his last forty years due to a lack of faith and fidelity in the people God called him to lead. During these last years in the wilderness, Moses watched the generation that had experienced the Exodus from Egypt die on the doorsteps of the Promised Land. Moses could distinguish the blessed path of a faithful generation from the cursed path of a faithless one. So, in the book of Deuteronomy, God speaks one last time through Moses with an eye toward establishing a pattern of family faith transmission that can endure the test of time.

In chapter 4, Moses prepares his audience for the recitation of the decalogue by reminding them that he will soon die, and they will enter the Promised Land without him. The theme of this chapter is covenant faithfulness via diligent remembrance and faithful generational teaching. Moses instructs Israel regarding the events "their eyes have seen" to "teach them to your children and your children's children." (Deuteronomy 4:9) Moses reminds them that God's intent for assembling them at Mt. Horeb was to teach them His words that they might "revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children." (Deuteronomy 4:10b) Finally, Moses warns of the complacency that will come after generations have been born in the land; if the memory of God's instructions are not kept fresh on their minds, future generations will sin and suffer. (Deuteronomy 4:25ff)

Moving on to the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, we find the expectation of receptivity for Hebrew offspring given central prominence in the Decalogue. Commentators have often observed that the Ten Commandments split nicely, almost, into a group of commands that are focused on the human-God relationship and then human-human relationships. The friction comes in describing where the fifth command fits in this pattern. My observation is that this command, found at the center of the decalogue, exists as a pivotal piece which picks up the thread of faith transmission. This command carries with it a weighty consequence, "so that you may live long and it may go well for you in the land." (Deuteronomy 5:16b) If the fifth command is not kept, then no matter the efforts of

the parents, the child will not receive the faith, the covenant will be broken, and its blessings will cease.²

The touchstone of family faith formation and the call for continuity in relationship with God from generation to generation is the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). The opening line of this passage, the commitment that YHWH is the One God and the God of Israel, is the central proclamation of the Hebrew faith.³ It is impossible to overstate the significance of this claim, additionally one would be remiss to neglect the observation that the relationship of Israel to its God existed in a unique milieu of love. Craige emphasizes that this “language of loving God...is one of the features of Hebrew relationship to God” that preceded obedience and allowed for family language to be used when speaking of God as Father.⁴ Each community member is called to love God with their entire being: heart, soul and strength.⁵ Based on this love relationship with God, Hebrews are called not only to shape their own hearts to conform to the patterns of life delivered to them from God through Moses, but also to *impress* them upon their children. As we will see moving forward, this thread of faith being passed from one generation to the next is prominent throughout Deuteronomy. Consequently, in the words of Aladair MacDougall, “Deuteronomy offers a Biblical foundation for intergenerational ministry today.”⁶

The final verses of this section describe what Brueggemann describes as “saturation education.”⁷ As Bruner summarizes, “Awareness of God's presence, attentiveness to conversation about God, and consciousness of the action of God in our world, are woven throughout the life of faith. All space and time hold the potential for holiness to those who are alert. To keep God perpetually present in our lives and those of our children is a spiritual discipline.”⁸

We will conclude our survey by exploring Deuteronomy 6:20-25. Moses invites his audience to peer through the window to a future time when an Israelite child will ask her parents why they perform the religious rituals that are now being instated. For those who have participated in a Passover Seder, it

² Peter C. Craige, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The NIV Commentary on the Old Testament (Zondervan, 2012), 158.

³ Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 181.

⁴ Craige, 170.

⁵ See Block, 182-184 for a concise explanation of these three aspects of a human.

⁶ MacDougall, Alistair. “Intergenerational Dynamics in Deuteronomy.” In *Engage All Generations: A Strategic Toolkit for Creating Intergenerational Faith Communities*, ed. Cory Seibel (Abilene: ACU Press, 2021), 40.

⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy*, (Abingdon Press, 2011), 85.

⁸ Ron Bruner, “Living Deuteronomy 6: Parenting as a Spiritual Discipline,” in *Along the Way: Conversations About Children & Faith*, ed. Ron Bruner and Dana Kenamer Pemberton (ACU Press, 2015), 49.

is impossible to miss the correlation between the asking of questions by the child and the prepared answers given by the parents. This passage emphasizes the role of family and household in passing an understanding of the object of the faith on to the next generation. We note here the family context of this discussion, the story content of the parental answer, and the religious observance that is the impetus of the child's question.⁹

⁹ It seems likely that the annual feasts delineated in chapter 16 are at least partially in view here.

GENERATIONAL FAITH TRANSMISSION IN THE PSALMS

Many parents share a similar testimony of the sacramental awe and wonder experienced as the glory of the Divine is seen in and through the beauty of the newborn child. When one holds that child, in the words Tucker and Grant, “one becomes keenly aware that this work is much bigger than either the husband or the wife.”¹⁰ Psalm 127 is a psalm from the wisdom tradition¹¹ which reminds parents that God is both the source of these tiny blessings, and the hope of their successful upbringing.

The original meaning of this text, particularly the word house (*bayit*) in the opening verse, is somewhat vague. Perhaps house refers broadly to Zion, more narrowly to the temple or palace, figuratively to David’s lineage, or universally to anyone’s descendants.¹² DeClaissé-Walford points to the Jerusalem temple as the most literal antecedent for house.¹³ German argues for the third option, noting how the rare attribution to Solomon in the superscription would automatically call forth a vision of David’s once faithful and powerful household.¹⁴ Elie Assis makes an interesting, perhaps outlying, exegetical move. Assis asserts that through the conjoining of these two stanzas (v. 1-2; 3-5) a parallel is established between *house* and *children*, which is interpreted as instruction to post-exilic Israel to attend to the development of faithful progeny while waiting for God to make way for the eventual rebuilding of the temple.¹⁵ In the congregational setting today, this passage is most commonly used as a clarion call to parents to make the relationship with God a central part of their home.

Psalm 78 exhorts parents and grandparents to tell the stories of God’s past actions to their children for the purpose of instilling faith in them. According to VanGemeran, the Masoretic Text of Psalm 78 begins with the attention giving word “hear”,¹⁶ which clearly points the reader to the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:5-9). With a lengthy historical review that “attests to the faithfulness of God” and

¹⁰ W. Dennis Tucker Jr and Jamie A. Grant, *Psalms, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 799.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 789.

¹² Patrick D Miller, “Psalm 127: The House That Yahweh Builds,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7, no. 22 (February 1982), 124.

¹³ Nancy L. DeClaissé-Walford, *The Book of Psalms*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William BEerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 918.

¹⁴ Brian T German, “Contexts for Hearing: Reevaluating the Superscription of Psalm 127,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 37, no. 2 (December 2012), 197.

¹⁵ Elie Assis, “Family and Community as Substitutes for the Temple after Its Destruction: New Readings in Psalms 127 and 133,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 85, no. 1 (April 2009), 61.

¹⁶ Willem A. VanGemeran, *Psalms*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, Revised edition (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 2008), 505.

the “inappropriate response of previous generations”¹⁷, the psalmist provides a liturgical tool to aid the fulfillment of the Deuteronomistic imperative to instruct one’s children in the ways of God. The psalmist emphasizes the necessity of each generation proclaiming to the next “the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.” (Psalm 78:4) As Goldingay quintessentially summarizes, “It is vital that the present generation plays a role as a link between the past generation and the next generation.”¹⁸

SYNTHESIS OF THEMES, VALUES, AND COMMITMENTS

Today, parents fear the influence of culture on their children via media and peers. Yet, both Deuteronomy and Psalms remind us of the ancient and contemporary significance of the family in faith formation. I will propose that the family still has the capacity to powerfully influence its children for the sake of Christ. Parents still have the potential to tell children about the previous, gracious acts of God that point to the continued presence of God with us. Additionally, the family has the unparalleled ability to proclaim and perpetuate God’s way of life in this world to the next generation. Moving forward, this research will help parents build confidence in their ability to pass on their faith while revealing methods and practices that will help them create meaningful spiritual discussions in their homes.

SECTION 2: TOPIC HISTORY AND KEY VOICES

BIOLOGY OF FAITH

Narratively and anecdotally, Robert Coles introduced the academic world to the inner, spiritual world of children. His children’s book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, introduces readers to the young African-American girl given the task of integrating an all-white school in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1960. As a matter of fate, Coles found himself stuck in the traffic created by the protesters outside her school one morning. He volunteered his counseling services to Ruby and her family, and found in them a faith in God like nothing he had ever experienced. In 1990, in the latter part of a distinguished career of psychoanalytic child psychology, Robert Coles wrote the groundbreaking book, *The Spiritual Life of Children*. This work is of great interest, because Coles did not consider himself a religious man, nor did he set out to discover a spiritual dimension in the children he interviewed. It was the challenge

¹⁷ Tucker and Grant, 143.

¹⁸ John Goldingay, *Psalms: Volume 2 (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms): Psalms 42-89*, ed. Tremper Longman III (Baker Academic, 2007), 485.

of Anna Freud two decades into his career to revisit his early work and “look for what you might have missed back then” that directed him toward his findings regarding spirituality.¹⁹

Coles had interviewed hundreds of children, most of whom were living in at-risk environments. In hindsight, he was overwhelmed by the number of children, like Ruby, who spoke of her relationship with God (by whichever name the children knew the divine) as a means of comfort and support. Inspired by the words of a ten year old girl, and the musings of an aging Dorothy Day, he settled on the idea that we are all spiritual pilgrims who begin our search for meaning and connectivity at a very early age. The book closes with this:

“So it is we connect with one another, move in and out of one another’s lives, teach and heal and affirm one another, across space and time--all of us wanderers, explorers, adventurers, stragglers and ramblers, sometimes tramps or vagabonds, even fugitives, but now and then pilgrims: as children, as parents, as old ones about to take that final step, to enter that territory whose character none of us here ever knows. Yet how young we are when we start wondering about it all, the nature of the journey and of the final destination.”²⁰

Coles’ metaanalysis of three decades of psychoanalytic work with at-risk children uncovered an innate spirituality, an inborn tendency toward a relationship of trust and dialogue between children and a higher power. Coles’ writing resurrected an interest in spirituality among scholars and researchers in the field of psychology that had long shunned the role of religion.

In 1998, David Hay and Rebecca Nye of Great Britain added the groundbreaking work, *The Spirit of the Child*, to the conversation of spirituality as a biological reality. Hay and Nye both have theological training, but their primary careers are as a zoologist and child psychologist respectively. This work was inspired by the commissioning of a taskforce by the British government to assess and provide guidance concerning the spiritual and moral education of British children. Hay’s scientific research confirms what Coles proposed anecdotally, and also illustrates why this great truth is such a mystery. For Hay it became obvious that “spirituality is massively present in the lives of children. At the same time, however, it is hidden because of a culturally constructed forgetfulness which allows us to ignore the obvious.”²¹

¹⁹ Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, Reprint edition (Boston, Mass.: Mariner Books, 1991), xiii.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 335.

²¹ David Hay and Rebecca Nye, *The Spirit of the Child*. Revised edition (London ; Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006), 9.

The work of Hay and Nye produced the term “relational consciousness” as a way of describing spirituality. “Children’s spirituality was recognized by a distinctive property of mental activity, profound and intricate enough to be termed ‘consciousness’, and remarkable for its confinement to a broadly relational, inter- and intra-personal domain.”²² Analysis of a multitude of interviews with children revealed that this relational consciousness was manifested in four relationship categories: child-God, child-people, child-world (nature) and child-self.²³ The interviews conducted in this research uncovered experiences of transcendence for children via each of these four modes of relationship.

Lisa Miller is a clinical psychologist who has been approaching spirituality as a biological trait for the past two decades. Her life’s work has become, “the study of our inborn natural spirituality as foundational to mental health and wellness, particularly as it develops in the first two decades of life.”²⁴ At the beginning of her academic career, Miller was bothered by the dearth of scientific data pertaining to spirituality. This concern nurtured a passion in her that has inspired a new field of clinical, scientific research that has gleaned much valuable information for those concerned with the wellbeing of children and the transmission of faith to

young and future generations. Miller defines spirituality in terms that transcend specific religious affiliation. Spirituality is “a sense of a close personal relationship to God (or nature or the universe or whatever term each person used for higher power) and a vital source of daily guidance.”²⁵

Miller’s research has demonstrated that “we are hardwired for spiritual connection” and that spiritual development is a “biological and psychological imperative from birth.”²⁶ She links the lack of spiritual development to failure to thrive outcomes such as depression and addiction. The research indicates that healthy spiritual development in the first decade of life lays the groundwork for adolescents to face the monumental life questions and individuation struggles of the second decade. Miller documents the spiritual surge that accompanies the long recognized physical and emotional maturing that comes with adolescence and sheds light on the “quest” phase of teens and how it often coincides with the mid-life searching that takes place for parents of teens.²⁷

²² Ibid, 109.

²³ Ibid, 115.

²⁴ Dr Lisa Miller, *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*, Reprint edition (New York: Picador, 2016), 2.

²⁵ Ibid, 7.

²⁶ Ibid, 3.

²⁷ Ibid, 4.

In summary, writing about the most important aspect of human flourishing, she writes, “It’s about the inner life. It’s about finding meaning and purpose and relationship.”²⁸ Miller ends with seven pieces of practical advice for nurturing the spiritual formation of children:

1. Speak: Use spiritual language in daily settings to help your child develop the language to make meaning of life on spiritual terms.
2. Share: Let your child see and hear how you use spiritual experience as the path through which you resolve daily problems.
3. Connect: Patiently encourage conversations in which you actively listen as your child makes spiritual meaning of the life events that matter to them.
4. Teach: Share ritual, spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, and modes of expressing gratitude, appreciation and healing as a family.
5. Nurture: Help your child develop a loving engagement with animals and nature.
6. Care and Repair: Devote time to the relationships of the extended family. Help children know that they are part of a family that has existed for generations.
7. Strive: Be an agent of peace, justice, and reconciliation in the world.²⁹

CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

The demographic to be spotlighted in this project is that of preteens and their families. As such, it is appropriate to seek some understanding of this stage of life as developmental psychologists have come to understand it over the past century. We will take a brief look at the theories of Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, and James Fowler. These theories may add helpful insights to our understanding of ten- to twelve-year old children as we seek ways to nurture their spiritual development.

Piaget analyzes how the processes of thinking and reasoning develop as a child grows and matures. He says that “the formation of personality is dominated by the search for coherence and an organization of values that will prevent internal conflicts.”³⁰ Hands-on manipulatives for young children are evidence of Piaget’s work, as is the oft contradicted mindset that children are not cognitively ready for religious education until they come of age and are capable of abstract thought. As Catherine Stonehouse deduces from Piaget’s work, children are more like adults in their feelings than they are in their thinking.³¹ However, rather than addressing the feelings of children, the church

²⁸ Ibid, 327.

²⁹ Ibid, 331-348.

³⁰ Jean Piaget and Barbel Inhelder, *The Psychology Of The Child*, 2nd edition (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 158.

³¹ Catherine Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 1998), 70.

tends to focus on gearing children's education to the proper cognitive level. In Jean Piaget's theory of Cognitive Development, we find 10-12 year olds approaching the transition from concrete operations to formal (or abstract) operations.³² In the former stage children begin to think logically concerning actual objects, but not about hypothetical ideas. Children can backtrack through the steps they have taken in reverse order, and have a maturing sense of time.³³ In the latter stage children gain the ability to consider the consequences of ideas, even if they do not subscribe to a particular theory.³⁴ As children enter this stage they gain the ability to explore the ideas that others present without fully adopting their new perspective. This development often leads to an "experimental spirit" that drives children to explore new concepts and evaluate their value.³⁵ In other words, children entering this stage are motivated to use their abstract thinking skills to explore new ideas.

Perhaps the work of Erik Erikson has not influenced approaches to religious education as it should. Rather than focusing on cognitive development, Erikson documents the stages of psychosocial development highlighting a series of challenges that a human must master in order to continue the growth process. One idea that this project will return to from Erikson is this, "The fashionable insistence on dramatizing the dependence of children on adults often blinds us to the dependence of the older generation on the younger one. Mature man needs to be needed, and maturity needs guidance as well as encouragement from what has been produced and must be taken care of."³⁶ Erikson is speaking of the challenge in his penultimate stage that calls for late-middle adults to pass on the things they have learned to the next generation.

The challenge faced by 6-12 year olds focuses on industry vs. inferiority. Children of this age are eager to be productive and learn to take pride in the successful completion of a task. This is a time when systematic instruction is of great importance.³⁷ To successfully navigate the challenge of this stage, children find value in their ability to contribute meaningfully to the work of the community alongside adults. This stage gives way to the challenge of finding identity v. role confusion with the onset of puberty. This is the primary task of the teen years. Teens are highly cognizant of how they are perceived by others and desire to apply the skills they have developed to help them fit into productive roles in society.³⁸ In this stage social affirmation is of great value suggesting the importance of ceremonies that confirm a child's place in society. Reflecting on Erikson's psychosocial

³² Jean Piaget and David Elkind, *Six Psychological Studies*, trans. Anita Tenzer, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 6.

³³ Piaget and Inhelder, 100.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 132.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 145.

³⁶ Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), 267.

³⁷ Erikson, 259.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 261.

stages, Catherine Stonehouse emphasizes the importance of finding meaningful and age appropriate service opportunities for children to perform independently or in fellowship with adult believers.³⁹

James Fowler stands upon the shoulders of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg, focusing their work into a unified theory of faith development.⁴⁰ Fowler's second stage "Mythic-Literal Faith" characterizes 10-12 year olds as gaining the ability to create their own stories that carry meaning, not just surface retellings. They are attentive to stories that deliver historical facts and backgrounds about their family or community, yet in this concrete phase children are not ready to extract those embedded meanings from the story though they grasp the meaning in their own concrete, literal way. In this stage, as children develop the ability to consider the perspectives of others, they develop a perception of God as an independent anthropomorphic being capable of compassion and empathy toward humans based upon a recognition of their best intentions.⁴¹ Children in this state connect deeply with "symbolic and dramatic" materials and can retell the stories presented to them in thorough detail.⁴² The third stage which typically emerges with adolescence is the "Synthetic-Conventional" stage of the teen years. "Synthetic" characterizes the consideration, and when possible, assimilation of multiple views into the thought processes of youth, while the term "conventional" references the normative power of the community's beliefs and convictions. Teens desire to conform to the shared identity of their faith community, and unless thoroughly convinced otherwise will revert to the conventions of the group's commitments.⁴³

GENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF FAITH

One of the greatest societal changes in America over the past half century is the decline in intergenerational households and the rise in divorce rates. Many children do not live in a home with both birth parents present, and even fewer have grandparents present in the home as was once common in this country and certainly in many societies throughout history. Many have assumed that these changes in family structure, along with the ever increasing reach of media into the lives of children, have diminished the influence of family on the transmission of faith from one generation to the next. Vern Bengston began an intriguing study in 1970 which sought to quantify the impact of family of origin on the future faith of children. Fifty years ago Bengston began with the hypothesis, "In the context of the profound cultural, familial, and religious changes in American society recently,

³⁹Stonehouse, 67.

⁴⁰ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, Revised ed. edition (HarperOne, 1995), 39.

⁴¹ Ibid, 139.

⁴² Ibid, 149

⁴³ Ibid, 172-173.

intergenerational differences in values and religion will be more evident than intergenerational continuities."⁴⁴

In 2013, Bengtson published *Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down Across Generations*, revealing his findings from the data collected via surveys and interviews from 1970-2008. The research addresses three major questions:

To what extent are families able to pass on their religious faith to the next generation in today's rapidly changing society? How has this changed over the past several decades, in the context of remarkable cultural, familial, and religious change in American society? Why are some families able to achieve their goal of transmitting their faith to their children while others are not?⁴⁵

The data for this research was collected over a 25 year period, however, the participants represent nearly eight decades of separation in birth as the oldest interviewee in 1970 was born in 1909. The youngest eligible for interviews in 2005 were those born 18 years earlier in 1988.⁴⁶ Surprisingly, "results suggest that family influences on the religiosity of the younger generation has not weakened to the degree that has been widely reported."⁴⁷ How could this be? What factors were found to be common in the successful transmission of faith?

Research reveals that parenting styles have a powerful impact on religious transmission. Those who left the religion of their parents often cited "a distant or non-affirming parent-child relationship."⁴⁸ While, "having close emotional bonds with the father is strongly associated with the transmission of religiosity."⁴⁹ "Parents who interact with their children during their formative years in a warm, affirming, and respectful manner are more likely to pass on their religious tradition, beliefs, and practices."⁵⁰ The impact of a warm, loving relationship still has power for children who depart from family norms for a time. Prodigals are more likely to return home to the faith of their parents when bonds of love remain strong and the door to return is still perceived to be open.⁵¹

A surprising discovery for Bengtson was the high influence of grandparents on the faith of their descendants. Grandparents do not live with or near their grandchildren as they once did,

⁴⁴ Vern L. Bengtson, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations*, Reprint edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), ix.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 56.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 78.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 79.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 80.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 143.

however, increases in lifespan, combined with more tools for communication that are irrespective of location, have allowed grandparents to increase their influence. Bengston identifies two types of interaction between grandparents and their grandchildren that are strong conduits of religious transmission. “Skipped Generation” grandparents become primary spiritual influences in the absence of parents due to divorce, health, work, or emotional distance.⁵² Other grandparents play an “reinforcing” role, supporting and affirming the spiritual nurture of the parents, this is the most suitable scenario for faith transmission as all influential parties in the child’s life seem to be on the same page.⁵³

Bengston concludes that the rate of transmission between generations has not significantly changed over the span of his research. Will the influence of families continue to hold sway with generations to come? A chart in the final chapter indicates that “intergenerational religious momentum” is centered on family influences, followed by the impact of religious organizations, and only of tertiary importance are contextual factors such as peers and culture.⁵⁴ Bengston shares five take-away messages for parents that summarize the most important factors for successful faith transmission to subsequent generations:

1. Parents have more religious influence than they think.
2. Fervent faith cannot compensate for a distant dad.
3. Allowing children religious choice can encourage continuity.
4. Don’t forget the grandparents.
5. Don’t give up on Prodigals, because many do return.⁵⁵

A survey of other literature on this topic requires that we describe three terms related to the handing down of faith as we move forward. First, in the literature there is a differentiation between *transmission* and *transaction*. The term transmission has been defined as unidirectional with the child being a passive recipient.⁵⁶ Research regarding faith transmission evaluates the impact of parentally modeled behaviors such as church attendance, adherence to faith, and desire for children to have faith. When the term transactional is used it implies that parents are engaged in more purposeful, intentional, and mutual interactions with their children.⁵⁷ Research validates both transmissional and transactional influences upon children, with parental examples being the foundation and open, bidirectional discussion having a magnifying effect on children. Indicative of this Flor and Knapp say,

⁵² Ibid, 105.

⁵³ Ibid, 108.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 193.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 195-197.

⁵⁶ Douglas L. Flor and Nancy Flanagan Knapp, “Transmission and Transaction: Predicting Adolescents’ Internalization of Parental Religious Values,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 15, no. 4 (2001): 627.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 627.

"Frequent and open discussions were found to facilitate adolescent internalization and accentuated the effect of parental modeling."⁵⁸ Additionally, some researchers use the term *transformation* model. Particularly, Schwartz uses this term as a third step in which children benefit from being surrounded by a faith supportive peer group that reinforces parental value. Parents contribute by helping cultivate this kind of peer associations.⁵⁹

The bidirectional model of intergenerational faith transmission and parent child communication is of particular interest. De Mol, et al., define intergenerational transmission in a dialectic framework in which both participants are changed by the interaction.⁶⁰ Assigning more volition to the child, the term compliance is replaced with accommodation which implies a level of synthesis between parental teaching and the child's own understanding.⁶¹ De Mol states, "Intergenerational transmission...always involves construction of novel meaning."⁶²

Fleshing out our understanding of transactional practices we turn to models of parent-child communication. Boyatzis explored such spiritual conversations using a diary model in which parents recorded conversations with their children. In his sample he found that children initiated more than half of the conversations. Parents reported that they asked more open-ended questions which produced reciprocal, bi-lateral transactions.⁶³ These findings are based on a small sample, but are an encouraging peek into the window of actual parent-child interaction. Dollahite investigates parent-adolescent communication, as well. His findings indicate the value of parent-child communication, noting that adolescents rated religious conversations as the most faith formative method over and above parent example or church attendance.⁶⁴ Conversations were characteristically inspired by life situations, informal and took place at home or in the car. When formal conversations did take place they were usually connected to a structured spiritual activity such as a family devotional or holiday observance.⁶⁵ The most impactful conversations were child centered, meaning that the adolescent speaks more than the parent though the child is seeking understanding from the parent. The most receptive conversations were viewed as open, relevant to the youth's life, and nurturing to the parent-

⁵⁸ Ibid, 642-643.

⁵⁹ Kelly Dean Schwartz, "Transformations in Parent and Friend Faith Support Predicting Adolescents' Religious Faith," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 16, no. 4 (2006): 320.

⁶⁰ Jan De Mol et al., "Intergenerational Transmission in a Bidirectional Context," *Psychologica Belgica* 53, no. 3 (2013): 8.

⁶¹ Ibid, 15.

⁶² Ibid, 9.

⁶³ Chris J. Boyatzis and Denise L. Janicki, "Parent-Child Communication about Religion: Survey and Diary Data on Unilateral Transmission and Bi-Directional Reciprocity Styles," *Review of Religious Research* 44, no. 3 (2003): 264.

⁶⁴ David C. Dollahite and Jennifer Y. Thatcher, "Talking About Religion: How Highly Religious Youth and Parents Discuss Their Faith," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 620.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 624.

child relationship. Conversations that the youth perceived as restrictive, demanding, unsolicited, and too long, were labeled parent-centered, and often created negative feelings in the child.⁶⁶ Research indicates that shorter, more frequent conversations lead to the greatest internalization of values by the child.

APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In 1976, John Westerhoff published the seminal work that still reverberates through every significant text addressing the transmission of faith through methods of religious education, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*. Westerhoff outlines the history beginning in the early 20th century as religious education began to follow the patterns of expertise used in the public school system.⁶⁷ The influence of this movement is still felt in Sunday Schools today, as it has been fed by curriculum publishers which are often an extension of the denominational organization.⁶⁸ Throughout the 20th century trends and developments in the field of education and developmental psychology began to influence not only the educational approach of the public school system, but also that of the local church.

Westerhoff seems more in step with Erikson, and expresses frustration with the schooling model of religious education. The changes proposed by Westerhoff are not on the scale of remodeling, but rather establishing a new foundation for faith transmission.⁶⁹ He speaks harshly of what Sunday school has become saying, “we seem to have created an institution more concerned with teaching strategies, instructional gimmicks, and curricular resources than with spiritual mentors.”⁷⁰ Ultimately, Westerhoff is expressing angst over the institutionalization of Christianity. He sees faith as a thing to be caught through relationships rather than taught through a great curriculum. His prophetic book, almost a half century later, reads as a fresh work that confronts a reality that is still prevalent in the church today. Christianity is not another school subject like science, math, and social studies. Christianity is a way of life that cannot be learned solely, even primarily, in the classroom. Westerhoff claims the term enculturation which “emphasizes the process of interaction between and among persons of all ages.”⁷¹ He delineates the meaning of this further in an update section in the 2nd edition by describing the curriculum based schooling model as something done to children. Models of formation focused on developmental psychology and maturation through

⁶⁶ Ibid, 625-632.

⁶⁷ John H. Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?: Third Revised Edition*, Revised edition (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2012), 3.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁹ Westerhoff, 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 85.

⁷¹ Ibid, 82.

stages he refers to ministries *for* children. Finally, he describes his enculturation ideals as ministry *with* children and speaks of children and adults as pilgrims together on the spiritual journey.⁷²

One of the leading advocates for ministry with children, more precisely, ministry that brings all generations together is Holly Allen. She writes, "The best way for most people to link the narratives, communities, mentors, traditions and practices of their faith communities is to participate actively in intentionally age-integrated experiences with others in those faith communities."⁷³ Allen is passionate about moving beyond age and stage ministry noting that Christians are formed through relationships with other Christians and active participation in a community of faith. As alluded to in the section above on Erikson, older adults find fulfillment in teaching their way of life to youths. Allen's work lays a thorough foundation for the biblical, theological, and sociological value of intergenerational ministry. She envisions the church embracing again its power as an intergenerational community in which young, middle, and senior adults engage in mutual learning experiences alongside young children and teens.⁷⁴ Her work includes chapters addressing intergenerational approaches to worship, religious education, missional service, and small groups.

SECTION 3: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

A half century ago John Westerhoff and Vern Bengston were essentially asking the same question, "Will our children have faith?" and, "Do families have any influence on the outcome of child faith." Westerhoff came from a religious education background and offered internal critique of the church. Bengston's approach was as a sociologist on the fringe of organized religion more interested in family dynamics than religious models. Yet, there is correlation between the prophetic words of Westerhoff in 1976 and scientifically inspired conclusions based on a generation of research by Bengston. Westerhoff called for the church to focus less on public education models and more on enculturating young people through social engagement with all generations of the church body. Bengston reveals that the greatest factors and indicators of faith transmission between generations are first household relationship qualities, followed by engagement in the faith community.

The issue that put Westerhoff and Bengston on alert was the growing divide between the ethics of religious groups and an increasingly secular American society. The chasm between these two cultural standards continues to widen, yet hope remains that faith can still be passed on generationally. Westerhoff and Coles both use the term *pilgrims* to speak to the inner search for

⁷² Ibid, 103.

⁷³ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (InterVarsity Press, 2012): 63.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 270.

connection to purpose, other people, and a Higher Power. In doing so, they are observing what researchers like Hay, Nye, and Miller have demonstrated in their research. Namely, there is an inherently biological trait in humans that wires them for spirituality. This kernel of spirituality requires cultivation for full human development to occur, and the layers of culture that deny its existence have made that nurture more difficult in this era. Yet, Bengson's research holds that the family is the primary determining factor for the formation of faith in a young person. As a ministry practitioner, how do I help parents find best practices and shape the most helpful, faith nurturing environments for their children to develop spiritually?

A focus on the preteen age has been supported by Miller who cites adolescence not only as a physical and emotional transition, but also as a time of peaked spiritual searching. The importance of having laid a foundational groundwork of spiritual dialogue before the often tumultuous teen years is of great significance, as well. Developmentally this age can be described as in the early stages of transition between childhood and adulthood. Preteens think logically, but their logic breaks down in hypothetical realms. Fowler reveals the power of stories to carry meaning and ingrain historical knowledge at this age. Erikson reminds us that the ability to make a meaningful contribution to the group is of great importance to the preteen. With Erikson and Fowler we will keep in mind that in the next phase teens will be striving to find their role in the community, while inherently depending on the narrative of the faith community to filter and synthesize all of the new ideas and views with which they are presented.

Researchers recognize three layers of formation across generations that we want to keep in mind moving forward. Parents powerfully *transmit* faith through their modeling of religious behavior and unidirectional telling of religious content. Parent-child *transactions* enhance faith development through purposeful, bidirectional engagement. Additional *transformational* reinforcement of parental values is layered on through supportive peer groups. The window through which a child witnesses the interior growth and spiritual development of a parent comes through transactional, dialectic moments of engagement. Here at the level of interpersonal, intimate interaction between parent and child we find the heart of the matter. Where is the bottleneck that governs the passing of faith from parent to child, but in the conversations about the things that matter most?

We started with the Shema which challenged parents to talk with their children everywhere and all the time about the ways of God. We no longer live in a society in which parents and children are together most of the day. Furthermore, when families are together, they tend to be hurrying from event to event. Creating space for families to slow down together and have conversational moments related to religious convictions is a primary objective for helping parents share their faith with their children. In light of the Shema this proposal seems inorganic and engineered, however, we find Biblical support for the manufacturing of family spiritual time in the holidays of ancient Israel. This is

a worthy model for us to consider today. Reflecting on Fowler's valuation of the power of story and symbols for conveying meaning to children, we see precedence in the storytelling foundation and rich symbolism of the Passover Seder as a model for creating dialectic family moments.

This research has focused on the theological and theoretical underpinnings of ministry that builds bridges between parents and children that will support a transfer of faith from one generation to the next. Actually, we have found that these bridges are bidirectional because time spent on them strengthens and shapes the faith of all involved. Next steps call for a broad review of ministry models with the following tenets in mind. The best models will honor the innate spirituality of adults and children, recognizing all participants as mutual contributors and fellow pilgrims on a spiritual quest. A foundational element will be meaning filled stories. Of primary importance are stories of scripture, but we must also remain aware of modern, historical, and personal stories of faith particularly from the history of families and faith traditions. These stories should be shared in learning environments in which they will inspire mutual, dialectic conversations among parents and children, and perhaps a small circle of extended spiritual family members who share the ambition of creating a nurturing environment for the cultivation of faith in all participants.

Appendix C—Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report

NPO STATEMENT

Christian parents in today's culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith.

NPO SCOPE AND CONSTRAINTS

We live in a world in which parents and children are bombarded with a multitude of voices, yet research tells us that no voice is more significant in the life of a child than that of a parent. Even so, today parents are struggling to find their voice and to speak life into the spiritual hearts of children. If parents do not use their voice, then children will seek wisdom elsewhere. Success in addressing this NPO is measured by improving parental confidence and increasing the volume of parent child dialogue about God and faith in the home.

NPO CONTEXT

The context in which this NPO is being addressed is a community that is characterized as rural, southern, and both religiously and politically conservative. The initial plan was for all participants to be members of the Collegeside Church of Christ, however, changing circumstances may lead to a group of participants from multiple Christian traditions in Cookeville, Tennessee. Cookeville is a college town and is identified as a micropolitan city, that is a small town that serves as a regional economic hub for a large rural area. In order to address this NPO, parents of middle school children will be the primary target of growth and development. These parents will fall in an age range between 30 and 45 years of age. Preteen children will also be included in the ministry setting so that opportunities can be created to foster parent-child dialogue. Older and younger siblings of preteens will be included, also.

ROOT CAUSES

In the Discovery Workshop, the root causes of this NPO were identified as the parent's own relationship with God, the parent's lack of confidence and feelings of insecurity, and the absence of unscheduled time. Similarly, the Design Workshop disseminated root causes in five categories: family busy-ness, overstimulation, the self-doubt of parents, failures of communication, and societal mindsets. These root causes have been repeatedly agreed upon by one-on-one interviews. Parents struggle to talk to their children about significant topics because the schedule is full of other activities and electronic distractions. When opportunities do present themselves for parent-child dialogue, parents lack confidence in their own relationship with God, and furthermore, do not have the conversation skills to promote a healthy, meaningful dialogue about God, faith, and the ethical implications of theological understandings. Sadly, we recognize that parents struggle to pass on their own faith because in many cases it is still immature.

THREE BIG IDEAS

- 1) Parenting Class focused on improving parents' confidence in their own faith, developing communication skills, and thinking critically about the family calendar.
- 2) Create take home resources that parents can use to create family faith moments.
- 3) Develop training and resources to help parents lead family style or intergenerational small groups.

DEFINITION OF 'DONE'

The intended outcome of addressing this NPO is to increase the amount and quality of dialogue between parents and children regarding their relationship with God.

3 CONCEPT PITCHES

- 1) The first big idea is a parenting Class focused on improving parental confidence in their own faith, developing communication skills, and thinking critically about the family calendar. The audience for this class would be parents of pre-teen children who desire to grow in their ability to talk to their children about God. Christian parents in today's culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith. Participation in this class would provide parents with an opportunity to grow their relationship with God and gain tools to improve relationships with their children. This class would meet weekly and include the following foci: personal faith development, nurturing communication and time management skills, and presenting at home family assignments. This class will not be successful without the committed attendance of parents combined with a willingness to make an effort to execute take home assignments. The class will be successful if the amount of time spent in child-parent spiritual dialogue increases during and after the course. Feedback regarding weekly at home assignments combined with a before and after survey regarding volume of parent child faith discussions will provide benchmarks for success.

Parenting classes come in many shapes, sizes, and forms. This class will be unique in that it focuses on a specific outcome and combines the teaching of researched theories with hands-on modeling and at-home family assignments.

- 2) This project will focus on the development of at home resources that parents can use to create family faith moments. The resources will be shared with parents who will in turn use them at home with their children. Christian parents in today's culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith. Access to these resources would foster family interaction and provide discussion prompts, so that parents and children would be talking about God and their faith. These resources would best be administered as take homes from a parenting class in which training, role play work, and accountability discussions were provided. As stand alone tools, there is significant risk of failure to implement these resources at home due to a lack of training or accountability. The resources will be deemed successful if the amount of time spent in child-parent spiritual dialogue increases after implementation of the tools in the home. These resources will be judged first on actual usability and then rated on the increase in volume and quality of parent-child faith discussions following implementation. Many people are creating Christian resources to be used at home today. In order for these tools to be fruitful in the home, they must be easily accessible, aesthetically pleasing in appearance, and easy to use. Furthermore, these resources will be implemented to initiate parent-child dialogue about God.
- 3) Intergenerational small groups in which parents, children, and additional generations study, pray, worship, and share life together create a powerful atmosphere for spiritual dialogue. The audience for this ministry would be Christians of all ages from young

children to senior adults. All ages would be welcome at this table. Christian parents in today's culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith. Participants in these small groups would experience the power of intergenerational faith conversations and in the process be equipped for more regular adult-child faith dialogue. Parents would receive training to lead these groups, original curriculum would be provided to foster conversations across generational lines, and leaders would receive weekly support. The greatest risk of failure for these groups would be a lack of strong leadership, long-term participation by families, and buy-in to the intergenerational model. Intergenerational small groups will be deemed successful if the amount of time spent in child-parent dialogue about God and faith increases over time after implementation. Direct feedback regarding bi-weekly group meetings along with a before and after survey regarding volume of parent child faith discussions will provide benchmarks for success. Small groups are a common ministry model today, but these groups would be unique in that children would be invited to participate in group worship and discussion alongside their own parents and other adults. Over time, the web of intergenerational bonds will strengthen and provide a safe home for the faith of growing children.

DESIGN WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDERS

- Involved, senior adult male
- Mother of a 12 year-old boy
- Father of an 11 year-old boy
- Mother of an 11-year old boy
- Empty nest mother

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

- Semi-retired intergenerational guru from Catholic Tradition
- Retired professor & children's pastor, expert in family ministry from Presbyterian Tradition
- Church of Christ minister and intergenerational expert

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Garland, Diana R. *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.

Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide is a two decade old work that has served as a staple textbook for seminary level Family Ministry courses. As such, this is a work that merits deep consideration for my family ministry based research. Dr. Garland is a professor at Baylor University. Chapter 3 “Families & Culture” is pertinent to the cultural mindset obstacles identified in my Design Workshop. Also, the topic of communication is covered in Chapter 5 “The Process of Family Development.” Finally, Chapter 7 contains much pertinent information related to family rituals and stories which will be fruitful to my research.

Jones, Timothy Paul. *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples*. Indianapolis, Ind: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011.

Family Ministry Field Guide is a decade old work by Southern Baptist Theological professor Timothy Paul Jones. This book has been a trusted resource for family ministers for a decade and Jones is a respected theologian and professor of ministry praxis. The focus of this text is toward equipping parents to be disciple makers in the home. Chapter 7 “We’re Supposed to Do That at Home?” contains theological underpinnings for the role of parents as spiritual mentors for their own children. The author contrasts this Biblical calling with the perceptions and practices of modern day parents. In the following chapters, Jones presents a vision to ministers of how to equip and prepare parents to fulfill their God-given roles and responsibilities.

Parrett, Gary A., S. Steve Kang, and J. I. Packer. *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church*. Illustrated edition. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2009.

Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful is a comprehensive text seeking the unification of the dichotomy between Christian education and formation. The authors are both professors of educational ministries at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Much of this book is beyond the scope of my project and current research, however, Chapter 11 was recommended for its exploration of faith formation “From Generation to Generation.” In particular the section on ritual and its formative impact on children should prove insightful for my research.

APPENDICES

DESIGN WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The Design Workshop was held on Saturday morning, October 30, 2021, in a large classroom at the Collegeside Church of Christ. The workshop began at 8:00 AM and ended at 12:30 PM. The schedule of the workshop was as follows:

8:00-9:00 Introduction & Confirmation of the NPO

Break

9:15-10:00 Obstacles & Life Ropes

Break

10:15-11:00 3-12-3 Brainstorm

11:15-12:00 \$100 Test & Shark Tank Speech

Break

12:10-12:30 Final Discussion and Next Steps

The workshop participants included:

- A male, senior member of the Collegeside church who is very engaged with young families.
- A mother of a 12 year-old boy and younger daughter who is a member of the Collegeside church.
- A father of a 11 year-old boy with both a younger and older daughter. The father is very active at Collegeside and in the faith lives of his children.
- A mother of an 11-year old boy and four siblings (total of 3 daughters and 2 sons). This family is very engaged in church life at Collegeside.

- An empty nest mother from Cookeville First Baptist Church. This mother has been very involved in her church and the faith lives of her college aged children. She is currently a graduate student in school psychology.

The day began with a review of the NPO as it stood. We used the “Reverse it” activity to identify obstacles that stand in the way of parent-child communication. Results from the “Reverse it” game were posted and sorted according to kind. We called our next activity “Obstacles and Life Ropes”, but it was substantially modeled after the “Pain-Gain Map.” We then used the “3-12-3 Brainstorm” to clarify strategies for addressing obstacles to the NPO and moving toward prototype ideas. To solidify prototypes we used the “\$100 Test” and “Shark Tank/ Elevator Speeches.”

From my perspective, the workshop was a “5” on a Likert scale . The five participants were very engaged and enthusiastic about the NPO. The volume of post ups they produced, along with input given by each in the discussion was indicative of their interest in the NPO. It is likely that several of these participants will be heavily involved in the prototype process.

DESIGN WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION

The workshop began with a welcome and introduction to the topic and the plan for the day.

Together we recited the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) as a way of preparing our hearts and setting our minds for the direction of the Design Workshop. Simply put, by addressing the NPO at hand we intend to help parents live out the Shema and more regularly, comfortably, and confidently talk to their children about God and faith.

As an icebreaker activity, the workshop leader and each participant was asked to name and describe their dream vacation. This served to open up dialogue and create connections between

the workshop contributors. Then the schedule for the day was presented and workshop ground rules were introduced and accepted by the group.

At this point, the NPO was introduced and discussed. The following quote was shared, “Our children are not falling away because the church is doing a poor job—although that is undoubtedly a factor. Our children are falling away because we are asking the church to do what God designed the family to accomplish. Discipleship and multi-generational faithfulness begins and ends at home. At best, the church is to play a supporting role.” (Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith*) This quote summarized the mindset from which the NPO is being cultivated.

Families are the most powerful influence on the spiritual life of children, even more influential than youth groups, children’s ministry, or media. This teaching resonated with the participants in the workshop.

The updated NPO was introduced, “Christian parents in today’s culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith.”

The evolution of this NPO from the original version was discussed, including the broadening from “parents in the Collegeside church” to “Christian parents today” and the change in language from the negatively stated problem to a positively stated parental desire. At this time the first half of the discovery statement produced in the 2020 Discovery Workshop was introduced, “Considering that our audience consists of both parents and children, we have discovered that parents need tools and resources to talk to their kids about God and faith.” Confirming strong agreement among the participants regarding the value and challenge of this NPO, we began our first formal exercise to identify the obstacles that stand in the way of accomplishing this process, the game “Reverse It!”

Reverse It! is a brainstorming exercise that parallels the approach that C.S. Lewis took to the human struggle in *The Screwtape Letters*. Instead of thinking of ways to assist parents in accomplishing the goals of the NPO, the task was to play the Devil's Advocate and name ways we could hinder the process. The group considered the question, "How can we prevent parents and children from talking about God?" Participants reflected independently for 3 minutes, writing as many ideas as they could on individual post it notes. These ideas were then posted up and read to the group. As each post was read, the process of sorting into related groups began. More than 30 ideas were sorted into five categories. All but one category included at least 7 posts with the over stimulation category having only one self named post. The group believed that overstimulation was indeed independent of the "busy" category and discussion of the impact of social media, YouTube, and other forms of constant entertainment ensued. This conversation led to the differentiation between the busy schedule that doesn't have space for families to stop and talk and the devices and distractions that prevent quality conversations even when families do have time. As an aside, the shortcomings of entertainment based ministry to children and teens

was discussed and disparaged. The value, and challenge, of teaching people to unplug and embrace silence and solitude was discussed.

The hectic schedule of families generated seven posts: “Keep them busy.” (x2) “Keep the parents

Reverse It!
How can we prevent parents
and children from talking
about God?

too busy (work, etc.).”

“Keep them too busy

with other things.” “Fill
the family schedule with

sports, dance,

friends...” “Make TV

and other entertainment

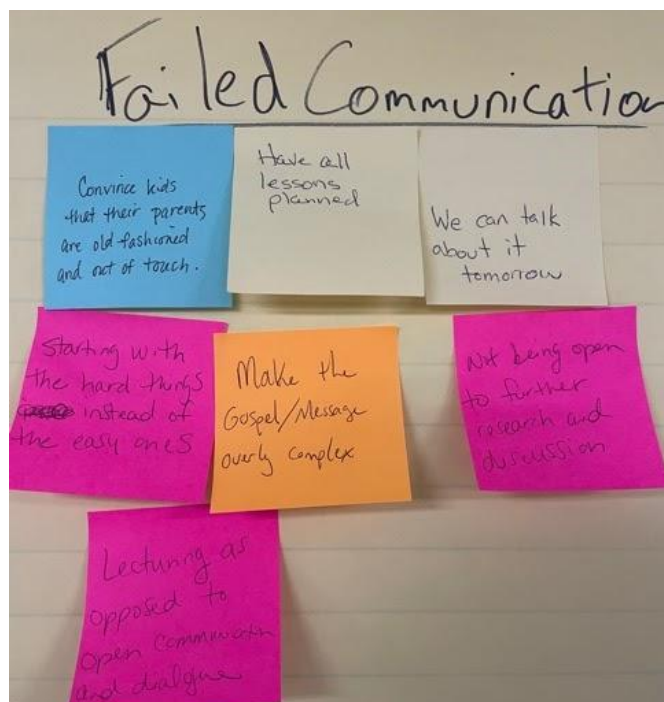
too enticing.” “Keep

them apart.”



The observation was made that “families have no time to just ‘be’ together, and it is hard to have conversations when you are always on the go.”

The next prominent category was failed communication. There are many hindrances to effective communication between parents and children even when they are given the time and space to speak to one another. One post dealt with a negative



mindset of the child, “Convince kids that their parents are old fashioned and out of touch.”

Others focused on faulty approaches by parents including, “Not being open to further research and discussion.” “Lecturing as opposed to open communication and dialogue.” Parents often make this process too hard on themselves by “Starting with hard things instead of the easy ones.” Or, “Making the gospel/message overly complex.” Often parents simply postpone

important conversations ad infinitum with comments like, “We can talk about it tomorrow.” Of course, we all know that tomorrow never comes. These issues are real and felt by all of the parents in the room.

The next category of obstacles was labeled “Societal Mindset.” This category includes worldview issues that are prevalent in our culture as a whole to the point that they infiltrate our thought processes as churches and as Christian families. These included attitudes toward God ranging from “Ignoring God in everyday life conversations.” to “Making ‘God’ a polarizing topic for our community.” Related to general societal issues is a “lack of caring” and “worrying about what others think.” Faulty approaches identified in churches include perpetuating the idea that “the leadership has all the answers.” Also, the lie that “Children learn best with their age group.” Two common misconceptions for parents in the church include, “Convince parents that their influence is not as important as other (influences)/(or the) church.” Additionally, “Focus on outward performance and behaviour modification rather than life change.” Finally, two

destructive and perhaps related cultural trends include, “Tear the family apart,” and “make life all about “me” rather than God.”

The next category focused on the internal struggles of parents identified as self doubt. Parents often feel that they “aren’t knowledgeable enough”. Maybe this is because parents tend to “make all lessons complex” leading to the struggle of “just not having the words to express” the things they want to tell their children. Another angle is related to personal guilt. This comes from being “reminded of how bad they were as kids.” “Parents feel ashamed, guilty, etc., so they are crippled from having God conversations.” These feelings lead to Isolation, “Convince parents



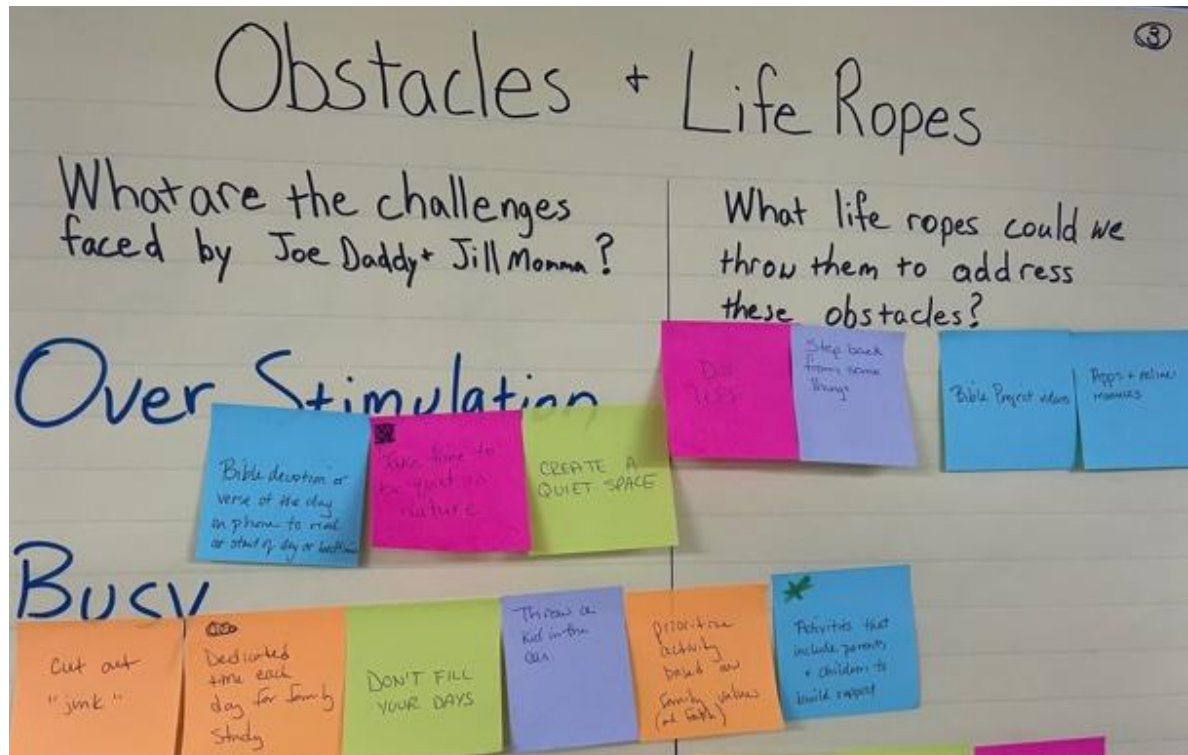
not to share their struggles with others so they feel alone.”

This is a comprehensive list of challenges with foci ranging from the general culture, to church mindsets, to core beliefs that haunt parents. This comprehensive list of obstacles will be very helpful in the design, production and implementation phases of the NPO project.

At this point, after this workshop had established its own ideas about obstacles and hindrances to the NPO, we reviewed the obstacles that were identified previously in the Discovery Workshop. The next part of the Discovery Statement was shared, “The parent’s own relationship with God,

the parent's lack of confidence and feelings of insecurity, and the absence of unscheduled time were identified as the root causes of this NPO." The obstacles that surfaced in both workshops, with only 40% of the participants being the same over a time lapse of one year, were essentially identical. This overlap leads me to the conclusion that the identified obstacles are very accurate and reflect the struggle that parents feel as they identify their own shortcomings and desire to improve in the area of communicating their faith to their own children.

Additionally, at this time we took a moment to discuss how the world would be different if this NPO was successfully addressed. The desired outcome portion of the Discovery Statement was shared with the group, "The desire to address this need is based upon the belief that it could improve parental confidence, parent-child relationships, parent-God and child-God relationships. Ultimately, it is believed that increasing the amount of dialogue between parents and children about God and faith will improve all relationships in which the child and/or parent engage." The Design Workshop participants were in agreement with this statement and overwhelmingly agreed that this NPO was worth addressing because it aligns both with their personal parental desires and disappointments. Increasing the "God Talk" among family members is a shared goal among Christian families, and a life change with which parents feel they need assistance.



After taking a short break, the five categories identified in the previous exercise were posted for our “Obstacles & Life Ropes” activity. The purpose of this activity was to find ways to address the challenges that had been previously identified. The question was asked, “What life ropes could we throw to parents to address these obstacles?” Answers given are listed below in their categories:

1) Overstimulation:

- a) Bible devotion or verse of the day on phone to read at start of day or bedtime.
- b) Take time to be quiet in nature.
- c) Create a quiet space.
- d) Do less.
- e) Step back from some things.
- f) Bible Project videos.
- g) Apps and online resources

2) Busy

- a) Cut out "junk"
- b) Dedicated time each day for family study.
- c) Don't fill your days.
- d) Throw a kid in the car.
- e) Prioritize activities based on family values.
- f) Activities that include parents and children to build rapport.



3) Failed Communication

- a) Provide opportunities to build up marriages and to support and equip single parents.
 - b) Conversation starters at the dinner table.
 - c) Round table conversations with family that provides prepared questions.
 - d) Tell your kids that they can , “Call me anytime.”
 - e) Know that any conversation is better than no communication.
 - f) Be interested in whatever your kid talks about and they will care more about what you have to say.
 - g) Identify when your child is most open to conversation.
- 4) Self Doubt
- a) Daily practices to build faith (Bible, Prayer, Worship)
 - b) Re-engagement with adult bible class and study
 - c) Study Together
 - d) You don’t need all the answers, you just need to know where to look together.
 - e) Find family study materials that assist in Family discussion.
 - f) Reflect inwardly more.
 - g) Small group studies with a few other families.
 - h) God meets us where we are. Meet your kid where they are.
 - i) Remind adults of their identity in Christ.
 - j) “We have faith in you.”
 - k) “If the world is wrong, right your own self.”
 - l) Parent class on equipping children spiritually.
- 5) Societal Mindset:

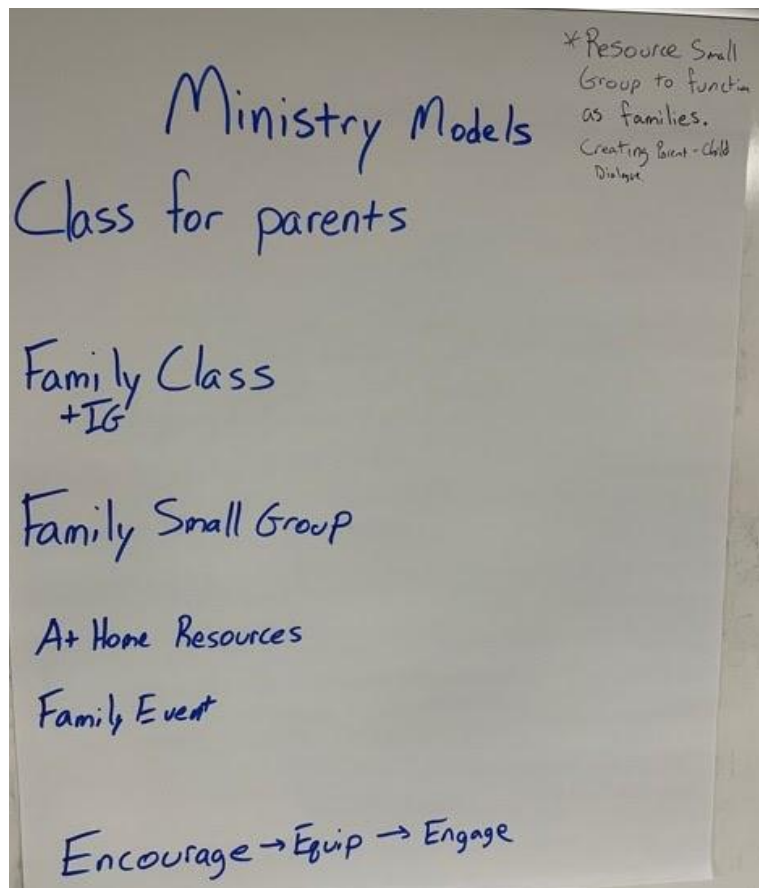
- a) Encourage parents to post scriptural affirmations where they see them.
- b) Make congregational worship the focus.
- c) More love and grace when communicating. Less judgment.
- d) Basic theological guide (catechism)
- e) Be involved with your kids lives.
- f) Turn off all media.
- g) Just as God doesn't care about the world around you, don't worry about the "world" but focus on what is in front of you.

After completing the "Obstacles and Life Ropes" chart we took a break, and when we came back the workshop took a turn to developing ideas that would address the identified obstacles related

to the NPO. The "3-12-3

Brainstorming" activity was used to begin the move toward prototypes.

The existing obstacles posted in the previous activity served as our obstacle map. Individuals reflected independently on these obstacles and developed their own ideas for ministry models to address these issues. When the ideas were shared with the group, five concepts surfaced, with a couple of the



concepts being viewed as overlapping to one another.

The recommendations fell into three categories that were labelled, “Encourage-Equip-Engage.”

“Encourage” was the description given to a class for parents, due to the negative feelings of self-doubt and guilt that are associated with the NPO from the perspective of parents. The concept

“Equip” was connected to supplying parents with tools and resources to use at home. Finally, the

“Engage” portion connected with three concepts that actually pulled parents and children

together to create settings for dialogue to actually occur. These three concepts were family

events, a family or intergenerational class, or family small groups. One particular

comment/recommendation from a participant stuck out because it connected strongly with one of

the one-on-one interviews following the Discovery Workshop, “Resource small groups to

function as families to create parent-child dialogue.”

Having identified five coherent and reproducible ministry concepts, we continued our workshop

and began to narrow our focus toward our top three models. We used the “\$100 Test” in which

each participant was given \$100 to spend on prototype development based on their perception of

the value of each prototype. This proved to be a difficult decision for the participants due to the

value they saw in each concept. The most any participant spent on a single prototype was \$40

and the least was \$5. The two concepts that emerged in this exercise were the class for parents

and family small groups. Discussion led to the “Family Event” model being eliminated not for

lack of significance, but due to the fact that in our context such events are already a regular

occurrence. Furthermore, the concept of a family or intergenerational class was viewed as

essentially the same as a family or intergenerational small group. It was recognized that different

dynamics were in play based on when and where an intergenerational class or small group met,

but for purposes of design at this early stage these two models were merged into one prototype

\$100 Test

(Sum of \$100)

Prototype	Investment \$
1) Parent	30
2) At Home	15
3) Family E	10
4) Family/IG	25
5) Family Small	20

① Class for parents

Family Class
+ IG

③ Family Small Group

② At Home Resources

Family Event

proposal with the weight of the voting

tending toward a family small group.

The least money was designated toward developing at home resources, however, the workshop wanted to hold onto this piece not as a stand alone prototype, but as an element that would need to be supplied either as a take home for parents in a class setting or as a tool to be used in a family small group.

The final recommendation of the group was that the three models that should be

further explored included: a class for parents, at home resources, and family based small groups.

The last activity of the workshop was the “Elevator Speech/Shark Tank”. Each participant was given a speech template that helped them to consider the desired outcome, the strength of the prototype, and specific results that are to be expected. The object of this activity was to have workshop participants select and promote

their favorite prototype. This activity surfaced much of the intent and desires that each participant held for the prototypes that were on their hearts. Additionally, the language assigned by the participants will be helpful in promoting participation of other parents and families in the implementation of the prototypes. A quick survey of these valuable documents follows.

Several participants wished to promote a parenting class. The first writes: “Everyone wants to raise children who are followers of Christ.” In order to accomplish this goal all you need is a class that helps with communication and the ability to draw your kids into the word.” “Once you try this class, you will see the following outcomes: 1) A confidence in communicating with your

child.

2) A joy in facing the challenges of life together.

3) Strengthened relationships on your Christian journey. (Child-God, Parent-God, Parent-Child)”

Another participant writes:

“Everyone wants to learn how to conduct family small groups that learn about God and Christ.” In order to accomplish a good class, all you need to do is equip parents

Shark Tank/Elevator Speech Template

1) Desired Outcome:
Everyone wants to...
Raise children who are true followers of Christ

2) Power of the Prototype:
“In order to accomplish _____ all you need is (this prototype) ...
a class that helps with communication and the ability to draw your kids into the word.

3) Using the prototype will change your life.
Once you try _____, you will see these outcomes:

- 1) A confidence in communicating with your child
- 2) A joy in facing the challenges of life together
- 3) A strengthened relationship of your (child-God, Parent-God, Parent-child) christian journey

through teaching, guidance and modeling.

Shark Tank/Elevator Speech Template

1) Desired Outcome:
Everyone wants to...learn how to conduct family small groups that learn about God and Christ

2) Power of the Prototype:
"In order to accomplish a good class all you need is to gather equip parents thru teaching, guidance, and modeling

3) Using the prototype will change your life.
Once you try this class, you will see these outcomes:
 1) closer relationship with the group and with your children
 2) fulfillment for your accomplishments when you see your faith
 3) a closer walk with the Lord

This class will change your life. Once you try these techniques, you will see these outcomes:

- 1) A closer relationship with the group and with your children.
- 2) Fulfillment for your accomplishments which reinforces your faith.
- 3) A closer walk with the Lord.

The third participant writes, "Everyone wants to spiritually connect, guide and effectively communicate with their pre-teen child." "In

order to accomplish connection all you need is effective parenting resources, set projects to accomplish your goals, and have accountability in small group settings." "Using the prototype

Shark Tank/Elevator Speech Template

1) Desired Outcome:
Everyone wants to...spiritually connect, guide and effectively communicate with their pre-teen child.

2) Power of the Prototype:
"In order to accomplish connection all you need is effective parenting resources, set projects to accomplish your goals, and accountability in small group settings

3) Using the prototype will change your life.
Once you try this class, you will see these outcomes:
 1) open communication
 2) spiritual growth within the parent/child relationship & the child/God relationship
 3) stronger families & stronger communities

will change your life. Once you implement and put the goals into action, you will see these outcomes:

- 1) Open Communication
- 2) Spiritual growth within the parent/child and child/God relationships.

3) Stronger families and stronger communities.”

Shark Tank/Elevator Speech Template

1) Desired Outcome:
Everyone wants to...
Connect on a deeper level with their kids.

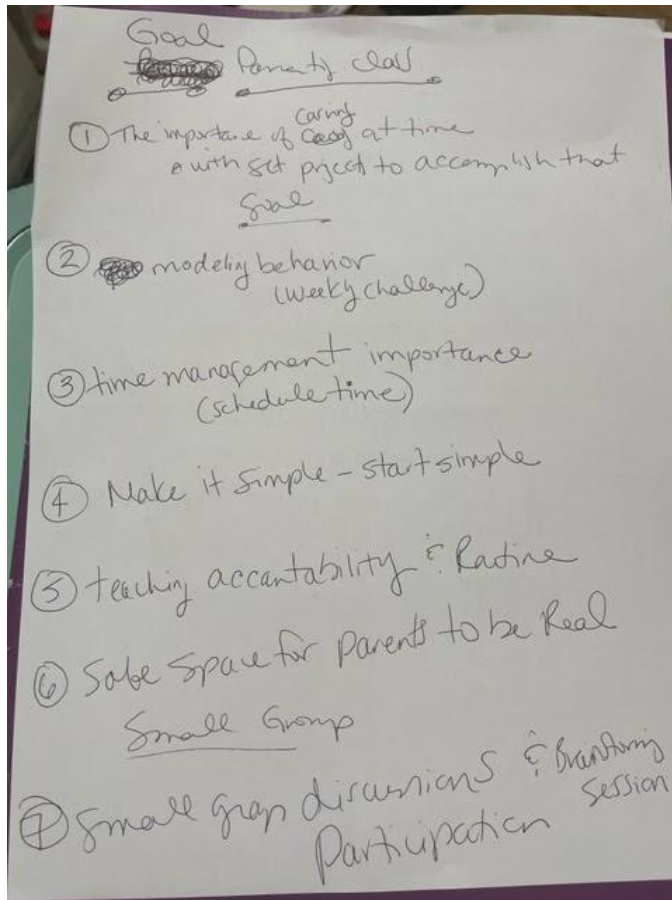
2) Power of the Prototype:
“In order to accomplish this goal all you need is (this prototype)...
to be part of a family small group where
parents and kids can come together with
other families in different seasons of life.

3) Using the prototype will change your life.
Once you try this small group you will see these outcomes:

- 1) A deeper understanding of God and faith in Christ for yourself and your kids
- 2) Resources and tools to help you connect at home.
- 3) Be encouraged to live the life God designed for your family.

Another participant writes,

“Everyone wants to connect on a deeper level with their kids.” “In order to accomplish this goal, all you need is to be part of a family small group where parents and kids can come together with other families in different seasons of life.” “Once you try this small group you will see these outcomes:

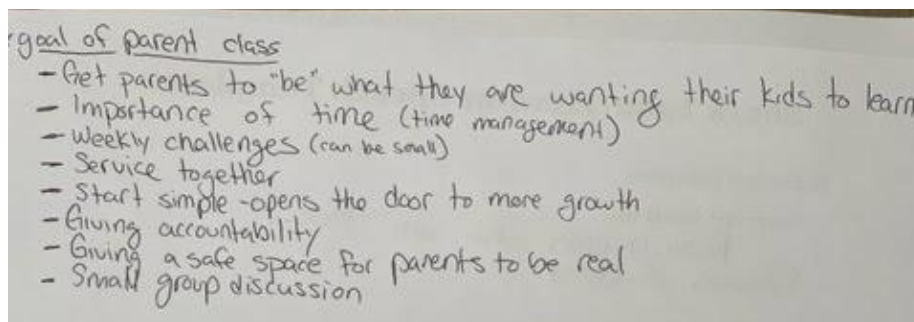


- 1) A deeper understanding of God and faith in Christ for yourself and your kids.
- 2) Resources and tools to help you connect at home.
- 3) Be encouraged to live the life God designed for your family."

Additional goals were submitted for a parenting class:

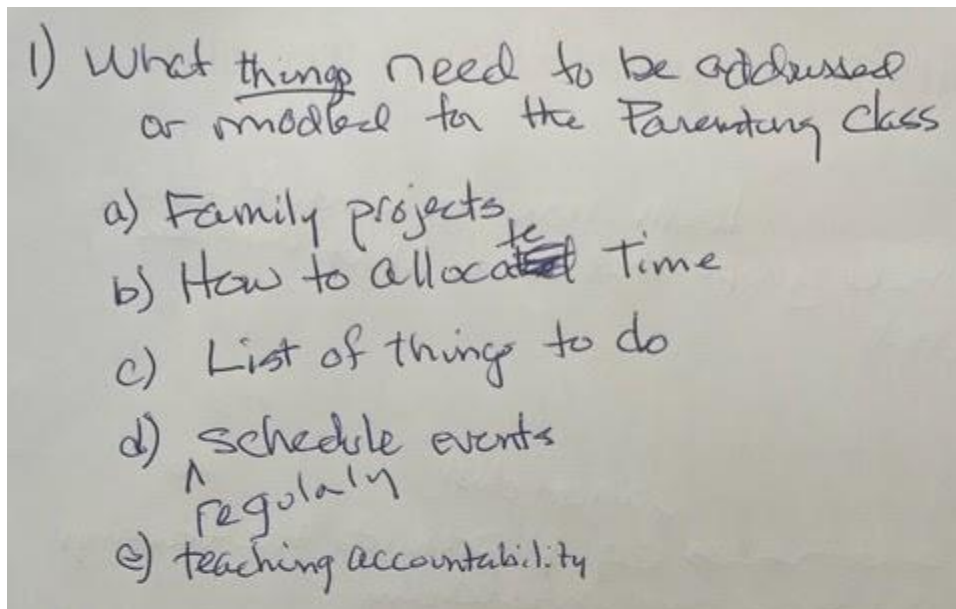
- 1) The importance of carving out time with set priorities to accomplish that goal.
- 2) Modeling behavior (weekly challenge)

- 3) Importance of time management (scheduling time)
- 4) Make it simple-start simple
- 5) Teaching accountability and routine
- 6) Safe space for parents to be real in a small group setting
- 7) Small group discussions, participation and brainstorming sessions.



Another writes these goals for a parenting class:

- 1) Get parents to “be” what they are wanting their kids to learn.
- 2) Importance of time (time management)
- 3) Weekly challenges (can be small)
- 4) Service together
- 5) Start simple-opens the door to more growth
- 6) Giving accountability
- 7) Giving a safe space for parents to be real
- 8) Small group discussion



Finally, these topics were submitted that need to be addressed or modeled in a parenting class.

- 1) Family projects
- 2) How to allocated time
- 3) List of things to do
- 4) Regularly scheduled events

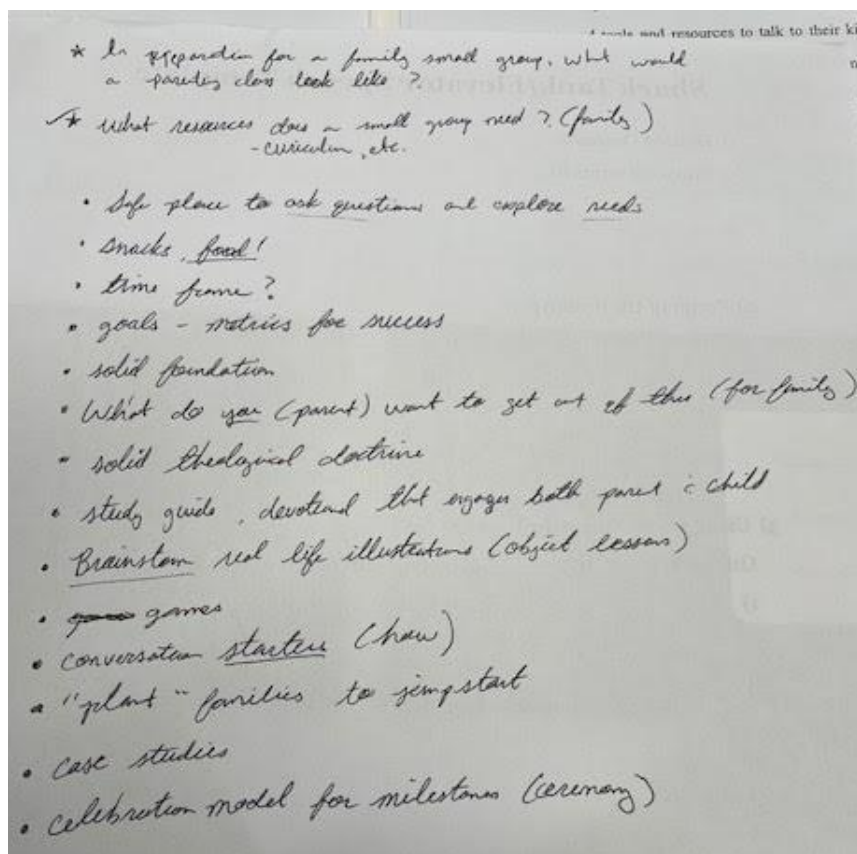
5) Teaching accountability

And finally, we have this submission on how to prepare parents to lead a family based small group through a parenting class.

- 1) Identify curriculum and resources that parents need to lead a family small group.
- 2) Safe place to ask questions and explore needs
- 3) Snacks, food!
- 4) Goals: Metrics for success
- 5) Solid foundation
- 6) What do you (parent) want to get out of this (for your family)?
- 7) Solid theological doctrine.
- 8) Study guide, devotional that engages both parent and child.
- 9) Brainstorm real life illustrations (object lessons)
- 10) Games
- 11) Conversation starters
- 12) “Plant” families to jumpstart
- 13) Case studies
- 14) Celebration model for milestones (ceremonies)

The discussion, ideas, and validation of the NPO produced in this workshop were substantial.

The participants displayed passion about the NPO and shared great insights based upon their own life experiences. They were all interested in being involved with this project as it continues into the prototype stage.



1-PAGE POST-WORKSHOP MESSAGE TO STAKEHOLDERS

Thank you so much for
participating in the Design

Workshop on Saturday. Our purpose was to clarify the NPO and propose three prototypes. There was strong confirmation for this NPO: "Christian parents in today's culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith."

You generated valuable information, and I am thankful to have pictures of all your posts. If you have any additional thoughts, probing questions, or ideas, please let me know. I look forward to transforming your feedback into a living prototype in the spring.

Three Proposed Prototypes:

1) **Class for parents:** The focus of the class would be on parenting for spiritual formation.

The class would include weekly assignments and provide not only ideas, but also accountability. This class would address unhelpful societal mindsets, over-stimulation, over-scheduling, coaching for communication, and helping parents overcome self-doubt.

- 2) **At Home Resources:** The goal is to produce a collection of resources that parents could use at home. Consensus of the group was that resources were important, however, they would be of little value without implementation within the context of one of the other ministry models.
- 3) **Resource Family/Intergenerational Small Groups:** As children reach the preteen years, some parents want to include their children in small group discussions. However, parents don't know how. An engaging curriculum guide for child, parent, and perhaps even representatives from senior generations would be helpful. A class to prepare and train parents for this small group format would be vital.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS DOCUMENTATION

11/3/21 Expert in Intergenerational Ministry from Presbyterian Tradition

With what do you agree? Why?

- IG small groups: So important. (Diana R. Garland *Family Ministry: A comprehensive Guide* was her textbook for Family ministry class, but replaced it with Holly Allen's IG Faith book)
- Children need not just the parents, but older generations as well.
- The interviewee is currently working on a 40 day lenten guide for IG small group.
- From Godly play she borrows the concept of "I Wonder questions..." for IG groups.
- **At home resources:** These are Great especially for a small group. Liturgical seasons are a great occasion for this.

(The following notes are related to a program of family ministry the interviewee created in her previous ministry context. She shared PDF's of this outline.)

Milestones in the small group: It is always a role for the parent to celebrate milestones, but full visibility within the small group or congregation adds another dimension. Family Faith

Milestones

- K: Faith Milestone: the Story, Jesus storybook & bookmarks
- 1st: Church Calendar (compared to US Calendar holidays that make us good Americans)
These special days form us into Christ followers.

[Personal story about Brother Peter, a Benedictine Monk from China. Renounce faith & join Chinese church or be imprisoned. 26 years imprisoned. NO Bible/pen/ Only Chinese calendar.

Wrote over 600 poems (by memory)

- 2nd: Centrality of Worship: Treasure Hunt: Pulpit, Communion Table, Roles of worship leaders, Baptistry, (Notecard with questions about why & answer on the back for parents)
- 3rd: Bible: Parents required to come with kids to a pre-class. Parent presents Bible to child, Pastor blesses & prays for the kids. 8-weeks with kids (should include parents) why & what of the creed. Creeds, Lord's Prayer, Doxology, 10 Commandments.
- 4th: Sacraments: baptism, communion, etc.
- 5th: Sex Education: Parents need to be involved. Birds & Bees Connection. Leslie Dickson: birdsandbeesconnection (website) Teach at church because God is over all things including our bodies. Boys & Dads; Girls & Moms
- 6th: "confirmation class" Journey toward maturity. 6 weeks with parents. Interview church elder board, process of making decisions, owning your own faith, know what you believe & why, Biblical story, mission & service, family & personal mission statement.
- 7th: Who am I? Created in imago dei; spiritual gifts
- 8th: Bible Study 101
- 9th: Spiritual Practices:

What do you disagree with? Why?

- Interviewee feared it would be hard to get parents to come to a class? Never felt successful in doing this in her ministry (unless strings were attached as with the Milestone ministries.)
- *Get parents to participate in training before small groups start.

- *Format: Sacred Suppers - once a month for 3 months. Scripture, group prayer, discussion guide for around the table. Potluck (Host provides main dish) At least one empty nest couple.
- During Covid: Sacred conversations over zoom. 6 sessions (every other Tuesday) Stories of courageous kids (Bible & Modern life) Wondering questions to follow the story. ...how did they feel? How would you have felt? Half-hour
- It doesn't have to be huge or complicated. Don't try every week. Keep it manageable!
- Wednesday night Dinner (Genon/**logos** style) theme/place mats with / decorations/ activities sometimes from the front or just at tables.
- Logos: Required meeting attendance by parents to register: pay tuition, volunteer commitment up front, these initial steps helped create buy in.
- You have to fit your context.

What is missing? (List of Resources)

When she did her Masters project on Family Ministry in the 90's there were no resources.

Thankfully this has changed.

- Mark DeVries Parents & children partnering in faith (Family based youth ministry)
- Ron Hunter D6 (New book/not spoken of by interviewee) *Recalibrate: A New Measure for Family Ministry*
- Timothy Paul Jones *Perspectives* in family ministry
 - *Family Ministry Field Guide: How to Equip parents to make Disciples* ***

- Fred Edie (Duke) *Book, bath, table & time Christian worship and source and resource for youth ministry* 2007
- Chap Clark, Kara Powell, Fuller: *Sticky Faith* and follow up material
 - Sustainable Children's Ministry (Not IG enough)
- *7 Family Ministry Essentials: A Strategy for Culture Change in Children's and Student Ministries* Michelle Anthony & Megan Marshman
- Smith & Denton: *Soul Searching...Exodus of youth & young adults from*
 - Nones
 - Moralistic Theistic Deism
- Hardest part is convincing parents that we need to do it differently.
- Robbie Castleman: *Parenting in the Pew* Why do parents need to be the primary faith formers?
 - * Good for a parenting seminar!
- Class for parents: Have them read a book to discuss.
- ***Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful* Ch. 11 Generation to Generation**
- Jim Willhoite: *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Matters*

11/8/2021 Expert in Intergenerational Ministry from Catholic Tradition

(Interviewee was a big fan of Leonard Sweet's early work and recognizes him as one who was on the leading edge of identifying the dawn of the PostModern Era. Familiar with George Fox because of Sweet.)

With what do you agree? Why?

Preteen is the perfect age for a faith building project like this, because all the research shows that many kids check out at this age and drop their faith. They may be attending for a while longer, but they lose any sense of connection to the faith of their parents.

He liked the three elements: class for parents, resources to use at home and intergenerational small group (or perhaps class/event) setting. *He thought these would all work well together in tandem.*

The topics identified for the parent class resonated with him.

Jim Merhaut Catholic Diocese of Dallas, surveyed parents. The list we came up with was very similar to what his research discovered: "Sanctity of family life, changing child."

Possible Resource: *SEARCH Institute, "Keepconnected" website

SEARCH Pilated a middle school parenting program.

Identified 5 developmental relationships/skills attitudes (Share power, prep for future....)

<https://keepconnected.searchinstitute.org/>

Some sessions online from Search (John has videos if I cannot locate them.)

Peer group aspect of a parenting class is really important.

Small group relationships will persist beyond the duration of a course of study.

Consider “Discussion Boards” like *Discourse* and _____. Password protected group.

(Groupme, if web based, for discussion.)

“Community hour” everybody available on Zoom from 7:30-9.

Check with group for best connection method.

Gentle way to keep people’s attention. Relational not “Accountability”

Home resources:

Independent learning should be facilitated using concepts of “Micro-learning.”

5-15 minutes, **Micro-learning** episodes. (podcast, video, practice) for transfer of information as modeled by the Ted Talk 16 minute time limit.

Micro learning online is like “Lego block learning”. Learning is not necessarily linear, but the micro units fit together and build a bigger knowledge base.

4- 10 minute sessions rather than a 45 minute video.

BibleProject figured this out and mastered it with focused stories, humor, and graphics.

What do you disagree with? Why?

No points of disagreement were revealed. The interviewee was very excited and encouraging about this project.

What is missing?

*How do you keep people connected through the week?? (FB/Groupme)

In the beginning of a course, you have to sell it by demonstrating and presenting a large knowledge base. Once you have people's interest, you may be able to use out of class time to create a flipped/hybrid approach to learning going into the 3rd or 4th session. Participants could be asked to listen to a 15-20 minute podcast, or brief video, or read an online article. At this point the session can morph from presenting to facilitating, hence a more blended mixture of learning/instruction/facilitation. At this point you could intro a skill online, then experience it in person. In person time becomes an immersion experience once the knowledge base has been established.

This is a chance to experiment and ask yourself, "What is best online vs. in person."

Weebly.com is what the interviewee uses for website building. Password protected page can be made for the particular class/group.

People are not linear anymore, building blocks can be moved around.

Impact on person & how learning environment works. Great experiment.

Part of the process is what I am learning about how to help my people. How do people learn best?

Small Group: Saw 3 pieces as a triangle, all connected. IG (small group) is the opportunity to model the kinds of practices we want to happen at home. What if curriculum was the same for parents class as in the family/IG model? (Pick an important topic, scripture)

Give us confidence that we could do this together with our kids.

Theory/practice/confidence are built in parent class time.

Moms & Dads: need some faith experiences to gain confidence that they can do these skills.

(Late 90's interviewee started the IG monthly/time)

How to connect these 3 elements?

Construct parent session to teach a skill for (faith conversation, prayer practices, how to read the Bible practices) Build IG small group skills into curriculum. Parents need confidence to perform the skill!!

Content of IG group should have life application practices, spiritual formation practices, justice/service skills.

Need more parent formation to feed IG groups.

“If the big people aren’t growing, the little won’t either.”

Project is going right at where research says we need to be.

“Who would know you got it wrong?” Nobody knows what it is supposed to look like. (I was encouraged at this point not to worry about being perfect. Just give it a try and learn from the mistakes.)

Prototype phase is just the 1st step and doesn't have to be perfect.

(Importance of IG interactions.)

Teens need those role models who have lived the life.

Seniors are an anchor in the chaotic life of teens.

Five Cries of Youth-Lutheran Youth Institute. (1974)

5) Cry of the Joyous: Known by 5 or more adults in their church (Merton Strahman)

Young people need models of stability.

Resources to follow up on:

- *Five Cries of Youth* by Merton Strahman
- Jim Merhuot, survey results regarding the kind of help parents are looking for with their children.
- <https://keepconnected.searchinstitute.org/> (Five developmental relationship skills/tools.)

Reflections:

- Part of the parenting class should address the needs of children. What are they looking for? What are they not finding in the church? Why are they losing their faith?

- What are the things parents need? Address these issues. (Merhaut, Discovery Workshop)
- Communication Skills
- Spiritual Disciplines: familiarize parents so they can teach them to their children.
- Importance of touching base between sessions with some sort of group communication tool.

11/10/2021 Intergenerational Spiritual Formation Expert/Church of Christ Minister

What do you agree with?

- I really like the word “Conversations” Creating healthy dialogue is a pre-requisite! This is a fertile area.
- “Multi-prong: good for helping parent, but could make me crazy.” (Recommendation is to focus on only one of the big ideas.)
- The big question is: “How do we create dialogue?” You need to create opportunities to:
 - Concretely practice
 - Give dialogue tips with faith questions.
 - Emphasize: Lines of communication being opened is the primary thing.
- Very partial to Small group approach.
- Testimony: “IG experience in his research helped create family conversations”

How might these pieces build on each other?

1. Class **orients** people
2. Give assignment

3. Process it the next week.

Possible approach to a “class” for research purposes:

- Take 6 families: assessment on front end...work through training & assignments...assessment afterwards.
- What would it look like...identify empty nest families (3) who felt like they did faith conversations well, 3 that didn't.
- Qualitative study: Why did this one do it well and this one not??
- Commitment to the group time is essential to success of this project! People must attend every week.

What do you disagree with?

- Pick one thing & make it laser sharp.
- Yellow flag on at home resources! Probably wouldn't happen
- Do as much as possible on site!! Control the situation.

What did I miss?

- “How does story sharing fit into this?” Narrative format.
- Hand select a group of guinea pigs.
- Can you get the whole church involved in the experience to make this a catalyst within the church?
- Role of the observer influences the small group.

- Same advice given to another friend on the DMIN journey: “Be as specific as possible on the project! Just pick one and be laser sharp into it!”

****Set high expectation for the commitment to the trial group.**

Pick small group of parents for a class on “conversations” (participants in the workshop)

Focus project on “training parents” possibly survey parent & kids separately

This is not a magnum opus.

This is a pebble in the lake, it doesn’t have to be a boulder. This is part 1.

Resource Recommendations:

Contemplative Youth Ministry by Mark Yaconelli

Clear definition of terms will be important for participants to create a common language.

Johnny Markum: Milestone training for kids (12 milestones) [Family Minister]

Appendix D—Milestone 4 Design Research Report

PROTOTYPE SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Prototype #1 Family/Small Group Curriculum

This prototype is a 6 session Easter curriculum designed for use with a family unit or multiple family units in a small group. Each lesson includes a starter question that connects the Bible story to personal life and allows a venue for parents to share life experiences with their children. The foundation of the curriculum is a video telling of each pericope in a Godly Play style using small wooden figures set in a sandbox. Following the video, families are encouraged to read corresponding Bible passages and the provided questions to guide a discussion. Two supplemental sections include an exercise to help engage the story in an imaginative way and a suggested family activity to help bring the story to life through a physical activity.

NPO Statement:

Christian parents in today's culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith.

Research question:

What is the most fruitful ministry tool to motivate, equip, and guide parents into more fruitful spiritual conversations with their children?

Assessment Benchmarks:

- 1) After previewing this content, do you feel motivated and/or more prepared to talk to your children about God?

- 2) After previewing this curriculum, are you interested in implementing it with your family?
- 3) Would you recommend this curriculum to another parent?
- 4) Have you noticed and taken advantage of more opportunities to speak with your child about God after using this curriculum?

Participant Description

The prototype was shared with a dozen parents/couples with children in the 10-12 year old range. Feedback was actually received from four of these dads. Additional feedback was provided by an empty nest couple in their 70's, an empty nest mom in her late 40's, a parent of a high school student, and a single young adult involved in youth ministry.

Learning Summary

Some very helpful feedback was received regarding this material. Overall, the quality of the content was appreciated. Constructive feedback focused on making the final version as user friendly as possible. One suggestion was to include estimated time suggestions for each segment of the curriculum. Another valuable suggestion involved the length of the video; rather than 8-10 minutes, one participant recommended boiling the presentation down to five minutes to accommodate attention spans of adolescents. Continuing with the user friendly focus, finding a format that would make it easy for parents to pull up the video and scripture readings was mentioned. Also, since the content of the curriculum was Easter based, a companion calendar with recommendations for when to do each lesson was advised. Participants did believe that the curriculum would facilitate good discussion during the appointed time in a way that would flow out into the rest of the week.

Most Important Discovery

Parents need to be motivated and prepared to lead their family in spiritual conversations. This curriculum is valuable, yet without the proper groundwork of encouragement, motivation, and preparation it will never be used. A training class for parents would be crucial for successful implementation.

Prototype #2 Proposed Topics for Parent Training

The second prototype was a low resolution proposal for a parent training tool. Thirteen topics were listed with a brief summary of each. The proposed topics included: our Biblical call, children are spiritual, nurturing natural spirituality, the adolescent mind in developmental theory, parents still have power, a new direction for discipling children, busy-ness: regaining control of the family calendar, over stimulation: unplugging and coming back to earth, overcoming our self doubt, understanding parental impact: transmission, transaction, and transformation, communication skills, and a small group model. Additionally, multiple format options were proposed for consideration and evaluation. These formats included: weekly (Sunday School or Wednesday night) class, weekend seminar, workshop, book, or short, accessible online video lessons.

NPO Statement:

Christian parents in today's culture want to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith.

Research question:

What is the most fruitful ministry tool to motivate, equip, and guide parents into more fruitful spiritual conversations with their children?

Assessment Benchmarks:

- 1) After previewing this content, do you feel motivated and/or more prepared to talk to your children about God?
- 2) After previewing this content, are you interested in participating in this learning experience?
- 3) Would you recommend another parent to participate in this training?
- 4) Would a learning experience like this help you take advantage of more opportunities to speak with your child about God?

Participant Description

The prototype was shared with a dozen parents/couples with children in the 10-12 year old range. Feedback was actually received from four of these dads. Additional feedback was provided by an empty nest couple in their 70's, an empty nest mom in her late 40's, a parent of a high school student, and a single young adult involved in youth ministry.

Learning Summary

The topics that were presented were all rated as highly valuable and pertinent to parents. Responses highlight the significant need for parents to be reminded of their role and value. Adults face many challenges and distractions that divert them from the important role of

parenting. Also, a disconnect has developed between parents and children in our society. It seems that parents don't know how to start conversations with their children. Also, churches in general do not do a good job of supporting parents, rather the impression is that church ministries give the perception of replacing parents and assume the responsibility of forming faith in children. Responses varied on the most fruitful way to package this material which leads to the most important discovery.

Most Important Discovery

Parents need to be motivated and prepared to lead their family in spiritual conversations. However, parents have a huge list of things they feel like they should be doing or doing better. In short, parents are overwhelmed and struggling. In order to make progress toward the NPO the starting point must require low commitment and be highly accessible. Essentially, parents need to be encouraged and guided toward easy, attainable footholds to start the journey.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH ESSAY ON THE EMERGING SOLUTION (2,000-2500 word)

INTRODUCTION

Are the challenges facing parents today any different than those faced by prior generations of parents? What are the unique challenges that this generation faces in the realm of parenting? My guess is that one of the first arenas that comes to mind is the realm of screens. Certainly, media has been an issue that parents have grappled with for generations. The books we should or shouldn't allow our children to read has been called to question for generations. Which music genres and what television programs or movies should I allow my child to consume? These questions are not new, but the volume of media to which children now have access and the ease of that access is unprecedented.

In the nineteenth chapter of First Kings, we read of Elijah's iconic meeting with God on Mount Horeb. God was not in the great wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the stillness that followed God revealed himself to Elijah as a gentle whisper. Today we live in a world that knows not stillness, and thus risks not knowing the voice of God. We live in a world that is always plugged in, online, and live streamed. Furthermore, our theology reminds us of the relational nature of God and the relational nature of humans as image bearers of God. Yet, our current and emerging technologies are creating new modes of relating. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known." Paul could have never imagined a world in which we see our loved ones face to face from across the country. Paul does not address the question of being fully known via the wonders of the internet,

yet we as parents in the 21st century are called to evaluate and use appropriately all of these amazing and frightening technologies. How then shall we proceed?

Overstimulation

One of the identifying marks of Generation Z, children born from 2005-2025, is their access to technology. “They are all “digital natives,” meaning they do not remember life without technology, a smart phone, or social media.”⁷⁵ Concerns of children and entertainment technology are not new, but rather iterative. Three quarters of a century ago screens entered the living rooms and battled for center stage in the family’s social time. “The television has, for a vast number of our fellow human beings, destroyed family meals, home cooking, hobbies, homework, study, and family games.”⁷⁶ I can attest to this from my own childhood experience when most meals, even when we were at the kitchen table were within earshot of a television. Over the past quarter century screens have moved from the living room to the pockets and hands of children and adults. According to 2021 Common Sense Media research tweens are spending more than two and a half hours per day watching videos while tweens spend on average three and a quarter hours.⁷⁷ Most of this time is spent on individual devices watching online videos. One-third of adolescents surveyed chose YouTube as the one site they could not live without.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Lynn Barger Elliot, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities.” in *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, ed. Holly Cotterton Allen (Abilene: ACU Press, 2018), 81.

⁷⁶ Roger Scruton, “Hiding Behind the Screen,” (The New Atlantis, no. 28, 2010): 56.

⁷⁷ Rideout, V. and Robb, M. B. The role of media during the pandemic: Connection, creativity, and learning for tweens and teens. (San Francisco, CA: Common Sense, 2021): 8.

⁷⁸ Rideout and Robb, 8.

Digital Social Circles

Watching videos is not the only attraction screens hold for humans in the 21st century. Looking again at the Common Sense Media research we learn, between 2019 and 2021, the total amount of screen media used each day went from 4:44 to 5:33 among tweens, and from 7:22 to 8:39 among teens. This is a much faster increase in just two years than was seen in the previous four years.⁷⁹ One obviously would conclude that this rate of increase was greatly impacted by the pandemic as humans experienced an unprecedented level of isolation over a period of months. Additionally, for clarity's sake these numbers are from self reports and are the summation of time reported on separate media forms. That is to say, if an adolescent was watching television and scrolling through social media on their phone, that time was counted twice in the summation of screen time reported.

Over the past 30 years, media has morphed from primarily unidirectional formats into bidirectional venues in which the user both receives and sends messages. At some point in the mid-1990's the term social media was birthed, and indeed over the past couple of decades the social nature of media has exploded.⁸⁰ Tweens average 18 minutes a day of social media usage, while teens spend nearly an hour and a half a day on sites like Snapchat and Instagram.⁸¹ As a parent, I testify that this is perhaps the most concerning development of our time.

Some researchers point to positive effects of internet usage in teens, "On the basis of these studies, we have formulated a hypothesis that may explain the Internet's positive effects-the

⁷⁹ Rideout and Robb, 3.

⁸⁰ <https://www.giraffesocialmedia.co.uk/who-coined-the-term-social-media-first/> Accessed 5/21/22 at 8:22 AM.

⁸¹ Rideout and Robb, 8.

Internet enhanced self-disclosure hypothesis. This hypothesis states that the positive effects of the Internet on social connectedness and well-being can be explained by enhanced online self-disclosure. Online self-disclosure refers to online communication about personal topics that are typically not easily disclosed, such as one's feelings, worries, and vulnerabilities.”⁸² Essentially, Valkenburg and Peter are making the case that adolescents who suffer from shyness sometimes are able to get over their inhibitions and disclose more of their feelings and emotions in a virtual world where they have more control over the environment. Zizek’s research explores such interactions and makes this observation regarding self-disclosure and the feedback it garners, “As P guides the reaction in a desired direction through the limited interaction possibilities of the texting format, she excludes any development promoting, spontaneous, and critical resonance. If adolescents retreat to controllable interaction possibilities, they are likely to only express themselves in a reduced way.”⁸³ The question that this research seems to be asking is whether or not virtual relationships can replace the human need for a present, loving, and nurturing community. Zizek indicates that while these online interactions may be somewhat helpful to a teen who is processing inner turmoil, they are not on par with live interaction. The online community is less likely to say the hard things that would challenge the teen to evaluate her personal response to the challenges she is facing in real life. Additionally, responses that are challenging to the teen are easily glossed over. Thus, Zizek finds that online interactions do not provide the same level of relational benefits that lead to a teens development and growth that live, human relationships produce. In the words of Roger Scruton, “The retreat behind the screen

⁸² Patti M. Valkenburg and Jochen Peter, “Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18, no. 1 (2009): 2.

⁸³ Boris Zizek, “Digital Socialization? An Exploratory Sequential Analysis of Anonymous Adolescent Internet-Social Interaction,” *Human Development* 60, no. 5 (December 2017): 230.

is a way of retaining control over the encounter, while minimizing the need to acknowledge the other's point of view. It involves setting your will outside yourself, as a feature of virtual reality, while not risking it as it must be risked, if others are truly to be encountered.”⁸⁴ Essentially, the research shows that the increased disclosure that online media may draw out of a teen, does not solicit a well rounded and grounded response from the other end. Perhaps Paul would recognize these interactions as but a rudimentary mirror providing a dim reflection.

Lost in a Game

In the early 80's video games entered the home providing an escape for children, teens, and adults. Gaming and virtual technologies are not stagnating, but advancing beyond the rate of parental imagination, as virtual reality applications are the rage of the third decade of the 21st Century. The immersive nature of media technology demands the attention of the baptized community as we seek to keep real faith alive in ourselves and our offspring.

The amount of time that tweens and teens spend playing video games did not change significantly between 2019 and 2021, however that amount of time is definitely significant and worthy of our consideration. Tweens spend an average of 1:27 and teens spend 1:46 daily in gaming environments.⁸⁵ Holt and Kleiber have provided significant research into the psychological effects of gaming. They conclude that gaming, though it often provides a very enjoyable experience creating a sense of being in a state of flow, does not create pathological addiction in a psychologically healthy person.⁸⁶ However, they go on to warn, “Children and

⁸⁴ Scrutton, 60.

⁸⁵ Rideout and Robb, 8.

⁸⁶ Nicholas A. Holt and Douglas A. Kleiber, “The Sirens’ Song of Multiplayer Online Games,” *Children, Youth and Environments* 19, no. 1 (2009): 239.

youth still in the process of identity formation may be particularly at risk to these virtual playgrounds if left without external supports and supervision. Parents need to become as familiar with the virtual environments in which their children are playing as they are with TV and other media.”⁸⁷ The call to parents is not to leave your children unattended in the virtual world, rather to sit beside them as they venture into new worlds and help them establish appropriate boundaries regarding content and engagement with others in the cyber world.

Redeeming the Screen

In the spirit of a good old fashioned book burning, should we just call our families together and smash all our screens? As parents, or just as adults that realize our own frustrations over the unretrievable time we give to our screens, there are days when this seems like a wonderful idea. Yet, we know that technologies are here to stay, thus we must learn to live in a society that is dependent upon these devices and applications. How do we leverage these screens for the sake of our families and find redemptive uses for them?

First, we recognize that we can co-create positive family experiences with shared screen time. Researchers Padilla-Walker, Coyne, and Fraser sought to correlate the usage of different types of media with family connectedness. Results revealed that cell phone use and watching television or movies were the most common mediums used in families. Analyses also revealed that greater amounts of family cell phone use, coviewing of TV and movies, and co-playing of video games were associated with higher levels of family connection.⁸⁸ The primary reason my children received cell phones was so we could communicate with them when they were away

⁸⁷ Ibid., 240.

⁸⁸ Laura M. Padilla-Walker, Sarah M. Coyne, and Ashley M. Fraser, “Getting a High-Speed Family Connection: Associations Between Family Media Use and Family Connection,” *Family Relations* 61, no. 3 (2012): 434.

from us. In a season of life in which I am traveling the country for weeks at a time for work, it is a great comfort to see my children face to face via Facetime or Google Meets. The evidence suggests that technology is a useful tool for continuing and growing already healthy family connections.

Family games played around the kitchen table may be preferable, but I love our family traditions that center around big sporting events. At this stage, my teenage sons would rather watch the Super Bowl, NBA Finals, or the college football championships in our basement, surrounded by the smells and tastes they have come to expect, than with a group of friends. It brings my children joy when I join them in a video game competition on a cold or rainy day when outside play is not an option.

Shared screen time can create enhanced learning activities even for young children, “When adults actively engage children during screen use—talking about what they are seeing and doing—toddlers are 22 times more likely to apply what they learn from the screen to the real world, as compared with children whose caregivers do not provide an interactive learning experience.”⁸⁹ The concrete nature of a good story communicates more effectively with a tween than any lecture, therefore finding meaningful movies to watch together can be a great way to enter into important conversations and plant seeds of ingrained understanding concerning values that parents desire to instill.

George and Odgers posit, “although there are cases in which new technologies have introduced new risks to adolescent well-being (e.g., by creating a new platforms for bullying, interfering with sleep, and creating a digital archive that may carry reputational costs), most

⁸⁹ Zack, E.A. 2010. "Infant Transfer of Learning Across 2D/3D Dimensions: A Touch Screen Paradigm." PhD diss., Georgetown University.

behaviors and risks that are present in the online world appear to be mirrored offline.”⁹⁰ Trouble can find anyone online, however, if teens are troubled by real life, they are more likely to go looking for trouble when left unattended online. Based on the observations of George and Odgers, it seems that the first priority in keeping our kids safe online is helping them build a healthy social circle of caring adults and positive peers in the flesh. Also, the virtual world should be treated no differently than the real world. Good parents always want to know where their teen is going and who will be there. This is sound advice for the digital world as well. Finally, we need to take the technology journey with our children. We need to model good habits in our own screen usage, and we need to find ways to share the positive learning, growing, or simply entertaining opportunities technology affords us.

⁹⁰ Madeleine J. George and Candice L. Odgers, “Seven Fears and the Science of How Mobile Technologies May Be Influencing Adolescents in the Digital Age,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 6 (2015): 846.

MVP (MOST VIABLE PROTOTYPE)

Several key factors lead me to my most viable prototype. First, I am not in a located ministry, so my prototype needs to be something that I can share easily in multiple local churches. Also, parents need a starting point that requires little initial commitment while providing them with motivation, encouragement, and practical steps toward growth in the area of parenting for faith formation. As one of my prototype participants commented, many parents just don't understand that there is another way of doing children's ministry. "You need to write a book to explain the big idea, so they can understand the why behind the things you ask them to do."

My future goals will not place me in a local congregation, but rather in a university setting as a professor. This is an important factor as I prepare myself to teach future childrens ministers. Therefore, based upon my status, experience, and passion, the most viable prototype for me to pursue at this time is a book that will present a new vision for children's ministry within the church that respects the spirit of God in children and the vital role of parents in the process of spiritual formation. This format will allow me to present big picture concepts and to flesh them out into practical suggestions for families and churches. As a future professor, outlining this book is preparation for creating future courses. As a consultant to local churches, this work will provide a foundation to my ministry and allow church leaders to read and evaluate my ideas as a whole providing a basis for them to discern the future direction of their model for ministering to children.

WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Elliot, Lynn Barger “Generational Theory and Faith Communities.” in
InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry, ed. Holly
Cotterton Allen (Abilene: ACU Press, 2018), 73-84.
- Holt, Nicholas A. and Douglas A. Kleiber, “The Sirens’ Song of Multiplayer Online Games,”
Children, Youth and Environments 19, no. 1 (2009): 223–44.
- Madeleine J. George and Candice L. Odgers, “Seven Fears and the Science of How Mobile
Technologies May Be Influencing Adolescents in the Digital Age,” *Perspectives on
Psychological Science* 10, no. 6 (2015): 832–51.
- Laura M. Padilla-Walker, Sarah M. Coyne, and Ashley M. Fraser, “Getting a High-Speed Family
Connection: Associations Between Family Media Use and Family Connection,” *Family
Relations* 61, no. 3 (2012): 426–40.
- Rideout, V. and Robb, M. B. (2021). The role of media during the pandemic: Connection,
creativity, and learning for tweens and teens. San Francisco, CA: Common Sense.
- Scruton, Roger. “Hiding Behind the Screen,” *The New Atlantis*, no. 28 (2010): 48–60.
- <https://www.giraffesocialmedia.co.uk/who-coined-the-term-social-media-first/> Accessed 5/21/22
at 8:22 AM.
- Valkenburg, Patti M. and Jochen Peter, “Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A
Decade of Research,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18, no. 1 (2009): 1–5.
- Zack, E.A. 2010. "Infant Transfer of Learning Across 2D/3D Dimensions: A Touch Screen
Paradigm." PhD diss., Georgetown University.
- Boris Zizek, “Digital Socialization? An Exploratory Sequential Analysis of Anonymous
Adolescent Internet-Social Interaction,” *Human Development (0018716X)* 60, no. 5
(December 2017): 203–32, <https://doi.org/10.1159/000479082>.

APPENDICES

Prototype #1

Family/Small Group Easter Discussion Guides

Including: Video Links (From Collegeside Church
YouTube Page - Children's Lessons Play List),
Scripture References (Linked to BibleGateway.com),
Imaginative Exercises, and Memory Making Ideas

Easter Devotional #1 Triumphal Entry
Mark 11:1-11

Starter Questions:

What does Easter mean to you? During what Jewish holiday did the events of Easter (or Holy Week) take place? What leader and event was celebrated by *Passover*?

Watch Children's Lesson [2/28/2021 Collegeside Children's Lesson](#)

Because Passover was a celebration of the greatest deliverance in the history of Israel, the Exodus from Egypt, its celebration raised the expectations of the people that God would move again in a big way. The people coming to Jerusalem anticipated that one of these years, God would raise up a new Moses, a new David, a new Elijah that would overthrow the Roman authorities and re-establish the reign of King David's family. Jesus has been ministering, teaching, healing, casting out demons and raising dead people back to life. Rumors about his greatness were being spread throughout the region. No doubt, many Israelites thought Jesus was the Messiah, the one who would save them from Caesar. That is why the crowd responded the way that it did.

Read [Mark 11:1-11](#)

What kind of animal do most kings or generals ride into town? (Great horse, possibly a white horse) What did it say about Jesus that he rode a donkey? (Humble, different kind of conqueror)

Jesus sends two disciples ahead to pick up a donkey from a person they don't know. What would it have felt like to be the disciples sent into town? How do you think they felt when the owner of the donkey saw them and asked what they were doing?

Imagine that you are with your family, walking to Jerusalem, singing the psalms that you sang every year on this journey. You hear the crowd behind you. You run to get a palm branch, and you see Jesus coming on a colt. Talk about the images in your head as you imagine this moment. Describe the sights, sounds and smells of the day.

Memory Making:

As a family or small group, shout together, "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!" For extra credit, go outside, find some fallen branches or prune those branches or bushes you have been meaning to do all winter and wave them together shouting, "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!"

Easter Devotionals #2 Wither Tree and Temple Mark 11:12-25

Starter Questions: “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” Discuss this old saying. What does it mean? What are some examples you have experienced where this was true? Did you make a wrong judgment about a situation or about another person? How have you felt that another person pre-judged you unfairly?

Watch Children’s Lesson [3/7/2021 Collegeside Children's Lesson](#)

The Temple was intended to be a sacred place. It was a place where God’s presence could be felt by His people, a place where they could draw near to God and make sacrifices. The Temple was very busy during Passover week. Jews traveled from many miles away to be in Jerusalem for this festival, and many of them made sacrifices while they were in town. **What made Jesus so mad here?** (It was probably the people who took advantage of this situation for their own self-interest. Jesus saw through people’s exterior expressions to the depth of their hearts.) Some had turned this sacred time into a time for profit!

Read [Mark 11:12-25](#)

What did the fig tree look like from the road? What was missing from the tree when Jesus went to find his breakfast? (The tree looked green and leafy from a distance, but it had no fruit.)

The disciples heard Jesus curse the fig tree, and then the next morning they saw that it was all shriveled up. What would you have thought about the withered tree if you were there? What would you have been thinking about Jesus? How do you think the disciples felt about the shriveled tree?

Imagine that you are with your family in the temple. Your father is frustrated as he goes to buy an animal for the sacrifice, and it costs twice as much as it did last year. Then you see Jesus turning over tables. What does he look like? How is he dressed? How does it feel to see Jesus so upset?

Memory Making:

Make some bread together before the devotional and buy some “Easter Candy”. A family size chocolate bunny and a large loaf of honey bread ([recipe attached](#)) would be perfect. Share the chocolate and the bread while you discuss the two experiences of Easter in America. (Easter bunnies and death, burial and resurrection of Jesus) Which is the most meaningful? Is it OK to celebrate both? How do you as a family make the main thing the main thing?

Easter Devotionals #3 Last Supper
Mark 14:12-31

Starter Questions:

Have you ever read a book or seen a movie where someone was sent on a secret mission? Finish these instructions: When you get to the city park you will see a person wearing _____, they will tell you where to find _____.

Watch Children's Lesson [3/14/2021 Collegeside Children's Lesson](#)

This is the second time we have read about Jesus sending two of his disciples ahead of him on a mission. (Remember the donkey.) What would it be like to go on a secret mission for Jesus?

Read [Mark 14:12-31](#)

Normally, the Passover meal was celebrated with your family. Jesus is eating with His disciples this night. How is your church like your family? Are there people in your church that have become family for you? Who? If not, how can we change that?

While at the table, Jesus announced that one of his friends at the table would betray him. If you were one of Jesus' friends at the table, how would you have felt when he said that? What would you have said in response? Would you have been worried that you might mess up?

Peter is confident (one might say cocky) that he will not betray Jesus. Jesus tells him to his face that he will deny Jesus three times before morning. What would it feel like to be Peter in this conversation? How would you have responded to Jesus when he said this?

Imagine being at the table with Jesus, eating lamb, bitter herbs, charoset (apple mixture) and grape juice. Describe those tastes. How is this Passover different from other Passovers? Look at Jesus' face as he tells you the bread is his body that will be broken, and the cup is His blood that will be poured out. How does it feel to participate in this meal with Jesus? How does it change the way you think about the Lord's Supper/Communion that we celebrate together every Sunday.

Memory Making:

Make plans to attend a Passover celebration, or to host one at your own home. If you need help planning one at home, email wesgallagher8@gmail.com or check this for a script and instructions regarding preparations.

Easter Devotional #4 Dark Night in the Garden
Mark 14:32-52

Starter Questions:

Do you know what a “thin place” is? In the tradition of Celtic Christianity, a thin place is a location where the barrier between heaven and earth is small, thin. These are places that seem to awaken a human’s soul to the presence of God. Name some places/times when you feel close to God. (Maybe you feel close to God at a particular place of worship or retreat, a beautiful spot in nature, a location where you witnessed/participated in a meaningful event. It could be a time of day, like dawn, sunset, etc.)

Watch Children’s Lesson [3/21/2021 Colleside Children's Lesson](#)

Read [Mark 14:32-42](#)

Why was Jesus so committed to prayer on this night? What was weighing on his mind and heart?

Why do you think his disciples were falling asleep? Do you ever forget to pray for your friend? How do you feel when you realize you have let a friend down? When you have forgotten something important to a friend?

Read [Mark 14:43-52](#)

How did it feel for Jesus to be kissed by Judas, when Jesus knew it was a kiss of betrayal? What did the disciples think and feel when they saw the mob coming for Jesus? What do you think you would have done in that situation?

Some people believe the “young man who fled naked” was actually Mark the author of this gospel. If that is true, what personal comments might he want to share about that night as he writes about it years (perhaps decades) later?

Imagine being in the garden with Jesus. Create your own garden scene in your mind. What kinds of trees, bushes and flowers do you see? Describe the landscape. What do you smell? What do you hear? (birds, crickets, the wind in the trees) Allow quiet time for everyone to imagine their own scene, then share and compare about your garden.

Memory Making:

Find and go to a beautiful natural spot as a family. You can take a hike or just relax at a particular destination in your backyard, a city or state park, or a scenic overlook. Share a

moment of silence as a family as you reflect on Jesus' last night before the cross.

Easter Devotionals #5 Jesus and the Cross
Mark 14:53-63; 15:1-37

Starter Question: Tell the story of one event from your childhood that you will never forget.

Watch Children's Lesson [3/28/2022 Collegeseide Children's Lesson](#)

Read [Mark 14:53-63](#)

It was the religious leaders of Jesus' own nation that were most opposed to him. It was not Roman soldiers, but an armed Jewish mob, that arrested Jesus in the garden. It was the Jewish council, known as the Sanhedrin that initially convicted Jesus. **The religious leaders of Israel wanted Jesus dead!** But they could not kill him because of Roman law. Which is harder, to be rejected by people you know or to be hated by people you don't know?

Read [Mark 15:1-20](#)

Do you think Pilate truly wanted to kill Jesus? Why (not)? How did he try to avoid passing judgment on Jesus? Why did Pilate have Jesus crucified anyway? In what ways do you feel pressure from the crowd? Have you ever wanted something, or hoped something would happen, just because other people said it was cool? Think about that for a minute. What bothers you the most as Jesus is mocked in this scene?

Read [Mark 15:21-37](#)

The walk of shame! What could possibly be more humiliating than carrying the beam of wood on which you were to die through the city and out the gates to the hill where you were to be executed? After a sleepless night and horrible beating, Jesus cannot carry His cross all the way. Simon the Cyrene helps Jesus. Why is it fitting that Jesus not carry the cross alone?

Imagine being at the foot of Jesus' cross. What do you see, smell and hear? Imagine everything going dark from noon to 3 pm. Sit silently with this image for a minute. End the silence by reciting the Shepherd's Psalm together. Share with each other about what you saw and felt during this reflection.

Memory Making:

Make a cross. Find a couple of sticks (whatever size fits your family and yard situation) and tie or nail them together to make a cross. Leave this in a visible place to serve as a reminder to your family. If your situation dictates an inside cross, popsicle sticks will do the job. The memories are in the making, and the symbol calls to mind our Savior.

Easter Devotional#6 Resurrection
Mark 15:38-47; 16:1-8

Starter Questions:

Have you ever given up on something for which you have been waiting, then suddenly it comes? Have you ever had a moment in life where you felt like you had lost it all? How was your life “resurrected” from that loss or struggle. (Share stories of your life struggles with your children. It will help them gain perspective and develop resilience for their own struggles.)

Watch Children’s Lesson [4/4/2021 Colleside Children’s Lesson](#)

Read [Mark 15:38-47](#)

Why do you think the centurion made this profession of faith? What did he see in Jesus that was different from the many other executions of which he had been a part?

What was the significance of the curtain ripping in the temple? (symbolic of the veil separating man from God. Jesus became the high priest and mediator, bridging the gap between God and humanity.

Read [Mark 16:1-8](#)

What do you think it was like for Mary Magdalene and Jesus’ mother to wait through the Sabbath day before they could return to the tomb?

How long do you think it was before the women told anyone what they had seen? Why do you think they were “trembling and bewildered”? What would your first response have been in this situation? What is your response today to the good news of Jesus’ Resurrection?

Imagine Pick witnesses from this story and work together to write a “realistic fiction” interview regarding these events. Imagine you are the centurion, Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of Jesus, or the “young man” dressed in a white robe. What questions would a journalist want to ask these witnesses? How would they answer? You can put together a special family newspaper with these articles.

Memory Making:

How will you make memories on Easter Sunday that point to the Resurrection? You can wrap a marshmallow in a crescent roll and have an empty tomb roll. Cut a round hole in your toast and fry an egg in it on the skillet. The cut out toast can serve as the stone. Lots of ideas for commemorating the resurrection through food or activities are out there. Pick

some traditions for your family to begin this year.

Prototype #2:

An Overview of Related Topics

Format of Delivery is To Be Determined

I. Theological and Theoretical Backgrounds

- 1) **Our Biblical Call:** What does the book of Deuteronomy call us to today? Briefly explore the ideal of parent-child faith transmission in the book of Deuteronomy focusing on the fifth command, “Honor your Father and Mother,” and the Shema, “Impress them upon your children.”

Reflect: “How does the book of Deuteronomy impact your soul? Does it bring guilt or inspiration or motivation?”

- 2) **Children are Spiritual:** Do children connect with God? Famous psychoanalytic child psychologist Robert Coles was not looking for the spiritual side of children when he began his work with at-risk children, but after two decades of research and child interviews he finally noticed that this was the common thread woven through all of the children he met who thrived in the face of great difficulty. (see *The Story of Ruby Bridges*) British researchers David Hay and Rebecca Nye confirmed that children have massive spirituality that is effectively snuffed out by the cultural norms that are forced upon them.

Explore young Samuel’s call in 1 Samuel 3: 1-14

Reflect: “What is your first memory of God? When you think of your childhood, when did you feel closest to God?”

3) Nurturing Natural Spirituality (Part 1): Building on the previously mentioned researchers, Lisa Miller's research has demonstrated that "we are hardwired for spiritual connection". Miller's research into human flourishing leads her to 7 pieces of practical advice. In this lesson we will discuss the first 3:

- a) **Speak:** Use spiritual language in daily settings to help your child develop the language to make meaning of life on spiritual terms.
- b) **Share:** Let your child see and hear how you use spiritual experience as the path through which you resolve daily problems.
- c) **Connect:** Patiently encourage conversations in which you actively listen as your child makes spiritual meaning of the life events that matter to them.

4) Nurturing Natural Spirituality (Part 2): Continuing with Millers advice we discuss the second half of her recommendations.

- a) **Teach:** Share ritual, spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, and modes of expressing gratitude, appreciation and healing as a family.
- b) **Nurture:** Help your child develop a loving engagement with animals and nature.
- c) **Care and Repair:** Devote time to the relationships of the extended family. Help children know that they are part of a family that has existed for generations.
- d) **Strive:** Be an agent of peace, justice, and reconciliation in the world.

5) The Tweenage Mind in Development Theory: We will take a brief look at the developmental theories of Piaget, Erikson and Fowler, as they pertain to 10-12 year old children. Piaget tells us that children might not "think" like adults, but they do "feel" like adults. Here we would discuss the transition from Piaget's concrete to abstract operational thinking. Erikson teaches us that children age 6-12 find value in their ability

to contribute meaningfully to the work of the community alongside adults. Fowler names this stage “Mythic-Literal faith” claiming that children are attentive to stories that deliver historical facts and backgrounds about their family or community. These children grasp the meanings of the stories in a felt way despite their inability to express this meaning in a concrete way. Children this age deeply connect with “symbolic and dramatic” materials.

6) **Parents (and grand parents) still have power:** Meet Vern Bengston and his research that was started in 1970. In light of rapid cultural change that began in the 1960’s and continues to this day, Bengston feared that families were becoming irrelevant in matters of faith formation, but he proved himself wrong. His research asked three major questions:

- a) “To what extent are families able to pass on their religious faith to the next generation in today’s rapidly changing society?
- b) How has this changed over the past several decades, in the context of remarkable cultural, familial, and religious change in American society?
- c) Why are some families able to achieve their goal of transmitting their faith to their children while others are not?”

Bengston determined that five factors contribute to the passing of faith from parent (or grandparent) to child.

- 1) Parents have more religious influence than they think.
- 2) Fervent faith cannot compensate for a distant dad.
- 3) Allowing children religious choice can encourage continuity.
- 4) Don’t forget the grandparents.

- 5) Don't give up on Prodigals, because many do return.
- 7) **A New Direction for Discipling Children:** In 1976, John Westerhoff wrote the book *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Westerhoff is scathing in his evaluation of "Sunday School" as a means for instructing children. He writes, "we seem to have created an institution more concerned with teaching strategies, instructional gimmicks, and curricular resources than with spiritual mentors." Westerhoff implores that we move past doing ministry *to* children or *for* children toward a model of doing ministry *with* children recognizing that children and adults as pilgrims together on the spiritual journey. Holly Allen has built on this foundation over the past two decades as she writes, "The best way for most people to link the narratives, communities, mentors, traditions and practices of their faith communities is to participate actively in intentionally age-integrated experiences with others in those faith communities." Westerhoff called for an "enculturation" model of assimilation, and Allen, alongside others, is calling the church to develop intergenerational models of ministry.

II. Practical steps

- 8) **Busy-Ness: Regaining Control of the Family Calendar** How do we become less busy? How do we make space for family time? How do we protect space for family time with God? In today's society, these are difficult questions that call us to challenging decisions.
- 9) **Over Stimulation: Unplugging and Coming Back to Earth** Today we aren't just busy, we are over-stimulated. Our addiction to technology, apps, phones and social media is

wrecking us. How bad is it? What are some strategies to help us form better boundaries and habits?

10) Overcoming Our Self Doubt: Most parents are intimidated by the perfect responses

Andy Griffith always had for Opi. How did he do that? We will never be as witty and wise in the moment as Andy's script writers, but how can we become bold enough to share a word of encouragement or divine insight with our children? Together we will explore our fears, and seek a way to move forward with increased confidence.

11) Understanding Our Parental Impact: Transmission, Transaction &

Transformation: Parents powerfully *transmit* faith through their modeling of religious behavior and unidirectional telling of religious content. Parent-child *transactions* enhance faith development through purposeful, bidirectional engagement. Additional *transformational* reinforcement of parental values is layered on through supportive peer groups. Here we see three important aspects of parenting for faith: modeling faith-filled behaviors, openly discussing how faith applies to life, and surrounding our children with faith filled peers.

12) Communication Skills: One of the greatest insights I have gained is the value of

starting small. Establishing a listening culture with our children at a young age is of great value. It is important that we improve our dialogue, as opposed to monologue, skills. Assigning more volition to the child, the term compliance is replaced with accommodation which implies a level of synthesis between parental teaching and the child's own understanding.

III. Developing the Model: Intergenerational Small Groups

A small group model: This would be an introduction to the small group prototype that is being developed.

Screenshots of Google Forms Questionnaire used to collect feedback on Prototype #1

The screenshot shows a Google Forms interface with a purple header bar containing the text "Untitled Section". The form contains three questions, each with a 5-point Likert scale. The first question is "How likely are you to use this tool with your family? *" with a red asterisk indicating it is required. The scale is labeled 1 to 5, with "I would never use this tool" at 1 and "I would definitely use this tool" at 5. A red warning icon and text "This is a required question" are visible below the scale. The second question is "If you are in a small group, how likely would your group be to use this tool?" with a scale labeled 1 to 5, with "My group would never agree to use this tool." at 1 and "My group would definitely use this tool" at 5. The third question is "Would you recommend a resource like this to another parent? *" with a scale labeled 1 to 5, with "Definitely Not" at 1 and "Definitely Yes" at 5. The browser's address bar shows the URL "le.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScb6jXSUueEAwxv3uB5hO1m16TXpgd_C_0G6-501NBvK5IZsQ/formResponse". The Windows taskbar is visible at the bottom with various application icons.

Project Work - Google Drive x Evaluation of Prototype 1 - G x Evaluation of Prototype #1 x how to take a scre

le.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScb6jXSUueEAwxv3uB5hO1m16TXpgd_C_0G6-501NBvK5IZsQ/formResponse

Untitled Section

How likely are you to use this tool with your family? *

1 2 3 4 5

I would never use this tool ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I would definitely use this tool

! This is a required question

If you are in a small group, how likely would your group be to use this tool?

1 2 3 4 5

My group would never agree to use this tool. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My group would definitely use this tool

Would you recommend a resource like this to another parent? *

1 2 3 4 5

Definitely Not ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Definitely Yes

Addressing the Goal

Keeping the goal of this project in mind: "Christian parents in today's culture need resources and training to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith."

Do you believe this resource would be successful at increasing conversations ^{*} about God and faith between parents and children?

1 2 3 4 5

Would NOT increase Parent-
Child faith discussions

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Would Definitely Foster
Parent-Child Faith Discussions

What do I need to think about to better address the goal with this tool? ^{*}

Your answer

What aspect of this curriculum is the most helpful in addressing this goal?

Your answer



Record of Responses to Prototype #1

Timestamp	How likely are you to use this tool with your family?	If you are in a small group, how likely would your group be to use this tool?	Would you recommend a resource like this to another parent?	Do you believe this resource would be successful at increasing conversations about God and faith between parents and children?	What do I need to think about to better address the goal with this tool?	What aspect of this curriculum is the most helpful in addressing this goal?
3/29/2022 8:56:30	1	3	5	5	It would be helpful if there were visuals with the lessons.	The questions which stir thought and the suggested activities.
3/29/2022 9:46:05	1	1	5	5	First let me say that I am 76 and the father of a 45 year old son. My small group is made up of 60 and 70 year old adults. Thus my responses about using the tool. In Lesson specific verse references would make processing easier. In Lesson 3 ask the adults to first reflect on their spiritual connection. In Lesson ask the adults to reflect on their involvement of children in spiritual activities.	Probably the II. Practical steps.

4/1/2022 10:23:54	2	2	5	5	I think any activities that can be used by parents at home would be awesome! I see some in there for the duration of Easter, and I think that more activities for throughout the year would be great!	
4/2/2022 8:04:15	5	4	5	5	An accompanying schedule/calendar/implementation guide would be helpful for most people. For example, how to time it leading up to Easter. The material accomplishes the goal, so I imagine the biggest obstacle will be getting people to actually use the material by making it as approachable as possible and giving them a guide for how to easily fit it into their context.	Heavily question-led, which facilitates conversation.

Record of Responses to Prototype #1 Continued

Starter Questions	Video Lesson	Scriptures and Discussion Guide	Imagine Exercise	Memory Making Ideas	What did you like most about this tool?
5	4	5	4	4	The way the elements of the lesson were woven together. It is so much more effective than just talking about the scriptures.
					The use of the thoughts and findings of the "experts" because they reinforce what parents think is true about their kids but may not have the academic foundation to move forward with the teaching.
5	5	5	5	5	Memory Making! Having groups do things as families I think is so connective and can help with the conversations about the WHY of it all!
5	5	5	5	5	Question and conversation focused. Practical activities.

Screenshots of Google Forms Questionnaire for Prototype #2

*For each Unit the same two questions are asked. Rate on a 1-5 scale and an open ended request for Comments or suggestions.

What Needs to Be Addressed?

Keeping the goal of this project in mind: "Christian parents in today's culture need resources and training to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith."

As you review this very low resolution prototype, I want to pick your brain in three ways.

1) Important Topics to be addressed.

- a) Evaluate the significance and value of the proposed topic list on a 1- 5 scale.
- b) If you have thoughts to add to a topic, space is available for comments, suggestions, and recommended resources, that will help me address that topic well. (Not required, I just want to know and record the suggestions that rise to the surface.)
- c) What topics/chapters am I missing? As I try to address the project goal written above, what am I not addressing here?

2) What is the venue or medium through which to communicate these topics? What is the most effective way to disseminate this information to Christian parents in our community? I am suggesting three formats for your feedback and am open to your creative suggestions.

- a) Weekly class setting. (eg., Sunday School or Wednesday night class)
- b) Weekend Seminar/Workshop
- c) Online resource with 10-12 minute video lessons
- d) Written in book form
- e) Other suggestions

[Next](#)

Page 1 of 23

[Clear form](#)

Unit 1

Our Biblical Call: What does the book of Deuteronomy call us to today? Briefly explore the ideal of parent-child faith transmission in the book of Deuteronomy focusing on the fifth command, "Honor your Father and Mother," and the Shema, "Impress them upon your children."

Reflect: "How does the book of Deuteronomy impact your soul? Does it bring guilt or inspiration or motivation?"

Rate Value of Unit 1 *

1 2 3 4 5

Not Helpful for Content ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very helpful content

Comments or Suggestions for Unit 1

Your answer

Unit 2

Children are Spiritual: Do children connect with God? Famous psychoanalytic child psychologist Robert Coles was not looking for the spiritual side of children when he began his work with at-risk children, but after two decades of research and child interviews he finally noticed that this was the common thread woven through all of the children he met who thrived in the face of great difficulty. (see The Story of Ruby Bridges)

British researchers David Hay and Rebecca Nye confirmed that children have massive spirituality that is effectively snuffed out by the cultural norms that are forced upon them.

Explore young Samuel's call in 1 Samuel 3: 1-14

Reflect: "What is your first memory of God? When you think of your childhood, when did you feel closest to God?"

Unit 3

Nurturing Natural Spirituality (Part 1): Building on the previously mentioned researchers, Lisa Miller's research has demonstrated that "we are hardwired for spiritual connection". Miller's research into human flourishing leads her to 7 pieces of practical advice. In this lesson we will discuss the first 3:

- 1) Speak: Use spiritual language in daily settings to help your child develop the language to make meaning of life on spiritual terms.
- 2) Share: Let your child see and hear how you use spiritual experience as the path through which you resolve daily problems.
- 3) Connect: Patiently encourage conversations in which you actively listen as your child makes spiritual meaning of the life events that matter to them.

Unit 4

Nurturing Natural Spirituality (Part 2): Continuing with Miller's advice we discuss the second half of her recommendations.

- 4) Teach: Share ritual, spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, and modes of expressing gratitude, appreciation and healing as a family.
- 5) Nurture: Help your child develop a loving engagement with animals and nature.
- 6) Care and Repair: Devote time to the relationships of the extended family. Help children know that they are part of a family that has existed for generations.
- 7) Strive: Be an agent of peace, justice, and reconciliation in the world.

Unit 5

The Tweenage Mind in Development Theory: We will take a brief look at the developmental theories of Piaget, Erikson and Fowler, as they pertain to 10-12 year old children.

Piaget tells us that children might not "think" like adults, but they do "feel" like adults. Here we would discuss the transition from Piaget's concrete to abstract operational thinking.

Erikson teaches us that children age 6-12 find value in their ability to contribute meaningfully to the work of the community alongside adults.

Fowler names this stage "Mythic-Literal faith" claiming that children are attentive to stories that deliver historical facts and backgrounds about their family or community. These children grasp the meanings of the stories in a felt way despite their inability to express this meaning in a concrete way. Children this age deeply connect with "symbolic and dramatic" materials.

Unit 6

Parents (and grand parents) still have power: Meet Vern Bengston and his research that was started in 1970. In light of rapid cultural change that began in the 1960's and continues to this day, Bengston feared that families were becoming irrelevant in matters of faith formation, but he proved himself wrong. His research asked three major questions:

- 1) "To what extent are families able to pass on their religious faith to the next generation in today's rapidly changing society?
- 2) How has this changed over the past several decades, in the context of remarkable cultural, familial, and religious change in American society?

Why are some families able to achieve their goal of transmitting their faith to their children while others are not?" Bengston determined that five factors contribute to the passing of faith from parent (or grandparent) to child.

- 1) Parents have more religious influence than they think.
- 2) Fervent faith cannot compensate for a distant dad.
- 3) Allowing children religious choice can encourage continuity.
- 4) Don't forget the grandparents.
- 5) Don't give up on Prodigals, because many do return.

Unit 7

A New Direction for Discipling Children:

In 1976, John Westerhoff wrote the book *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Westerhoff is scathing in his evaluation of "Sunday School" as a means for instructing children. He writes, "we seem to have created an institution more concerned with teaching strategies, instructional gimmicks, and curricular resources than with spiritual mentors." Westerhoff implores that we move past doing ministry to children or for children toward a model of doing ministry with children recognizing that children and adults as pilgrims together on the spiritual journey.

Holly Allen has built on this foundation over the past two decades as she writes, "The best way for most people to link the narratives, communities, mentors, traditions and practices of their faith communities is to participate actively in intentionally age-integrated experiences with others in those faith communities." Westerhoff called for an "enculturation" model of assimilation, and Allen, alongside others, is calling the church to develop intergenerational models of ministry.

Unit 8

Busy-Ness: Regaining Control of the Family Calendar How do we become less busy? How do we make space for family time? How do we protect space for family time with God? In today's society, these are difficult questions that call us to challenging decisions.

Unit 9

Over Stimulation: Unplugging and Coming Back to Earth Today we aren't just busy, we are over-stimulated. Our addiction to technology, apps, phones and social media is wrecking us. How bad is it? What are some strategies to help us form better boundaries and habits?

Unit 10

Overcoming Our Self Doubt: Most parents are intimidated by the perfect responses Andy Griffith always had for Opi. How did he do that? We will never be as witty and wise in the moment as Andy's script writers, but how can we become bold enough to share a word of encouragement or divine insight with our children? Together we will explore our fears, and seek a way to move forward with increased confidence.

Unit 11

Understanding Our Parental Impact: Transmission, Transaction & Transformation:

Parents powerfully transmit faith through their modeling of religious behavior and unidirectional telling of religious content. Parent-child transactions enhance faith development through purposeful, bidirectional engagement. Additional transformational reinforcement of parental values is layered on through supportive peer groups.

Here we see three important aspects of parenting for faith: modeling faith-filled behaviors, openly discussing how faith applies to life, and surrounding our children with faith filled peers.

Unit 12

Communication Skills: One of the greatest insights I have gained is the value of starting small. Establishing a listening culture with our children at a young age is of great value. It is important that we improve our dialogue, as opposed to monologue, skills. Assigning more volition to the child, the term compliance is replaced with accommodation which implies a level of synthesis between parental teaching and the child's own understanding.

Unit 13

A small group model: This would be an introduction to the small group prototype that is being developed.

Evaluation of Topic List

Do you believe a resource covering these topics would be successful at increasing conversations about God and faith between parents and children? *

1 2 3 4 5

Would NOT increase Parent-Child faith discussions

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Would Definitely Foster Parent-Child Faith Discussions

What units of this curriculum are the most helpful in addressing this goal?

Your answer

What topics do I need to think about to better address the goal with this tool?

Your answer

How should this message be disseminated?

The target audience for this content is primarily parents of 10-12 year-olds, with parents of younger and older children as a secondary audience. What is the most effective way to communicate this content to this demographic. Please consider the effectiveness of the following formats for disseminating this information and helping parents move toward the stated goal.

Weekly Class Setting (Sunday School/ Wednesday night class)

As you consider this format consider these questions:

- 1) Would parents choose to attend at these times?
- 2) What are the benefits of this format?
- 3) What are the disadvantages?

Rate the projected success/impact of a Class format *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Little Impact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Large Impact

Comments or Suggestions for a weekly class model.

Your answer _____

*The same format of rating impact and Comments or Suggestions follows for each format.

Weekend Seminar/Workshop/Retreat

As you consider this format consider these questions:

- 1) Would parents choose to attend at these times?
- 2) What are the benefits of this format?
- 3) What are the disadvantages?

Online Video Lessons

As you consider this format consider these questions:

- 1) Would parents choose to "click" on these resources?
- 2) What are the benefits of this format?
- 3) What are the disadvantages?

Book Format

As you consider this format consider these questions:

- 1) Would parents choose to read a resources on these topics?
- 2) What are the benefits of this format?
- 3) What are the disadvantages?

Your Final Suggestions

We agree on the importance of the issue: "Christian parents in today's culture need resources and training to face the challenge and have conversations with their pre-teen children about matters of God and faith."

What is the best way for me to provide these resources or training?

If I had 200 hours to devote to addressing the goal of increasing and improving ^{*} parent-child discussions about God and faith, which resource would be a better, more impactful use of my time?

- ☐ Prototype 1: Intergenerational Small Group Curriculum
- ☐ Prototype 2: Some form of teaching/training (Parenting Seminar, Class Series, Video series, or Book)

Teaching Format

If You chose Prototype #2, which format do you think is best?

- ☐ Weekly Class
- ☐ Weekend Seminar/Workshop
- ☐ Weekend Reterat
- ☐ Online Video Resource
- ☐ Book

Your Final Word

Thank you for taking the time to review and evaluate these prototypes. Do you have anything else to add?

What have I missed? What final thoughts are on your mind? Would you like to qualify or explain your answers to the format questions? Your input is valuable to me. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and instincts.

Your answer

Record of Responses to Prototype #2

Timestamp	Rate Value of Unit 1	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 1	Rate Value of Unit 2	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 2	Rate Value of Unit 3	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 3
3/31/2022 21:22:52	5		5		5	
4/1/2022 10:01:07	5	I think looking at books like Deuteronomy that are commonly overlooked in your typical "Sunday School" curriculum is a wonderful way of connecting students to all parts of scripture and giving them insight into context and importance for the rest of the stories they've heard throughout time at church	5		5	Incredible! Helping to cultivate a spiritual vocabulary to draw from and encouraging students to talk about their own faith I think will help to make it feel like their own connection and not just a regurgitation or adoption of beliefs from parents or mentors!
4/1/2022 23:47:35	5		4		5	
4/2/2022 11:17:10	5	To me unit 11 has applicability here as a sort of preamble. Parents need some insight into the importance of modeling and their own inner work, and how that will shape their parenting most. The goal would be to set people's mindset from the start that it's not just about tools and methods for parenting, but it is equally about the health, habits, practices, inner life, and modeling of the parents.	5		5	

Rat e Val ue of Unit 4	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 4	Rat e Valu e of Unit 5	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 5	Rate Valu e of Unit 6	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 6
5	I love all of these and especially appreciate the inclusion of number 7. I think that is critical that we help our children even at a very young age begin to see our role as agents of peace, justice, and reconciliation as we seek to be the image-bearers of Christ to the world around us.	5	I wonder if this unit might include opportunities for children and their families to participate in collaborative efforts within our communities. Efforts to “contribute meaningfully to the work of community alongside adults.”	5	Wow!! Number 2! In our society today, how can we best emphasize the crucial role that dads play with the goal of encouraging more active engagement in families, not assigning guilt or defeat on fathers.
5		5	It's so refreshing to see names familiar from psychology classes like Piaget and Erickson. I think the more we can expose youth leaders and parents to an understanding of developmental research, the better we can approach students as less-experienced humans rather than lesser-humans	5	Wonderful! I think an addition or focus that could be helpful is addressing the use of church attendance as a punishment. I know a few students in our own youth group that already have a growing resentment for church because it is used as a disciplinary tactic rather than a place for growth and connection. I think it would be good for parents to hear that even though (I hope) parents who use church as a punishment are in the minority.
5		3		5	
5		5	Expand to how this relates to all people of all ages. Humans have always connected with story, myth, and symbolism. In evangelical circles their tends to be an illiteracy in understanding symbolism and the role it plays, so some audiences may need	5	

			a “soft” intro.		
--	--	--	-----------------	--	--

Rate Valu e of Unit 7	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 7	Rate Valu e of Unit 8	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 8	Rate Valu e of Unit 9	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 9
5		5	This one might be the most difficult!! How do we carve time from our schedules, even for those things that we deem more important?!	5	Yes! Yes! Yes! And, can we help parents understand that phones don't actually belong to children. We can have rules about where phones have to be put or how much time can be used on devices. Even within our communities of faith, I think parents are struggling with this very difficult topic.
5		5		5	I really appreciate this message, I do wonder if there's a way to reword or rework it to appeal more to students. Even in my generation we've been told growing up how addicted we are to technology, and it's beginning to feel like a broken record. I only say this because it makes me wonder how many teens would immediately go into brain shut down mode or a defensive position from hearing once again how “addicted to technology” they are. I don't know if or how a “fix” for this would be, just something I thought about!
5		5		5	
5	Because it is so far from most people's current experience, people will need practical examples and/or “templates” for what this means and how it can look.	5	Incremental change (“baby steps”) will be more likely to be adopted by more people. A risk will be that an “ideal” version is so overwhelming that people make no change at all.	5	Modeling will be essential here. Can't ask kids to do what parents aren't willing to do.

Rate Value of Unit 10	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 10	Rate Value of Unit 11	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 11	Rate Value of Unit 12	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 12	Rate Value of Unit 13	Comments or Suggestions for Unit 13
5		5		5		5	
5		5		5	Yes! So many students I've talked to feel unheard or invalidated when approaching adults with their problems. I have to keep reminding myself, just because they aren't adult stresses doesn't mean they aren't valid stresses!	5	
3		5		4		3	Unsure how to rate based on description
5		5		5		5	

Do you believe a resource covering these topics would be successful at increasing conversations about God and faith between parents and children?	What units of this curriculum are the most helpful in addressing this goal?	What topics do I need to think about to better address the goal with this tool?
	I think parents need resources but in small, easy to digest segments. I don't think most parents have time to read all the research. They need an overview and some steps of implementation. Or 5 ideas of next steps.	
	Units concerning child development and listening on the part of the parent I think will be most helpful. Both open avenues for communication that could ultimately make all interactions more fruitful, 5 spiritual or otherwise.	Listening strategies or even some introductory counseling strategies. I took one intro to counseling class in college where we focused a lot on Carl Rogers, and I feel like that one class, though not qualifying me to be a mental health counselor, has helped me be a better listener and give me a better sense of emotional intelligence. I think any sort of education or training in that space would be helpful!
	5 Parental responsibility	
	They all seem interconnected and equally important. The practicality of 8-12 will provide contexts in which the other sections can be fleshed out in real 5 examples.	It is here but can not over-emphasize modeling and the parents' own inner work

Rate the projected success/impact of a Class format	Comments or Suggestions for a weekly class model.	Rate the projected success/impact of a seminar/workshop/retreat format	Comments or Suggestions for a seminar/workshop/retreat model.
2	It may depend on the location. Classes can be effective, but only if the people who are attending are engaged in the class. If they are passing time while their kids attend Bible class, this format will be less likely to achieve the intended goals.	5	In a weekend seminar, you have opportunities for teaching and discussion. There is time for conversation and feedback between presenters and attendees. Also, typically people who choose to attend a seminar do so because they want to get something out of it, not just because it's time for Bible class or whatever.
3	I only know my own church's struggles with attendance of parent-aged adults. I think it can be successful but I also know leaving it up to a weekly time slot can be difficult for traction in my own experience (which is not a very tenured experience and may not be indicative of other churches!!)	5	Retreats and workshops are always a good pull for families! It's difficult because it gives the whole process a timer that doesn't feel as present for weekly sessions but may prove to have more people signed up! I also think longer concentrations of time lends space for more intimate and connective experiences than a week-to-week activity
2		3	
5	Parental discussion will make this class model more engaging and memorable.	5	Interactive and dynamic environment, with full focus, would be effective, although getting people with young kids to be able to attend could be difficult.

Rate the projected success/impact of an online video format	Comments or Suggestions for an online video format.	Rate the projected success/impact of a book format	Comments or Suggestions for a book format.
4	I don't personally prefer video formats, but feedback from parents at school seems to indicate that lots of people prefer a short video to an email message. Maybe that is indicative of generational differences. It may be that a video appeals to parents of 10-12 year olds; whereas, I'd rather read the information in an email.	3	I don't know how many parents would read an entire book on this topic UNLESS it were formatted in short mini-lessons of 2-3 pages with a challenge at the end of each mini-lesson. Many people do not read books when podcasts and audio versions are so readily available.
4	When left to do things on their own time, it's difficult for people to remember to get around to it (sorry it took me so long to do this form!!) having said that, I think knowing these resources are available at any time with specific topics to highlight and discuss and replay as needed would be a welcome resource.	4	Books are great! I think the difficulty is that bookshelves everywhere (especially in a post-quarantine world) are probably overflowing with backlogs of "really good books I promise I'll get to soon" (I know mine is). On the other side of that argument, I think it's availability as curriculum to be able to be used by churches as weekend studies or weekly studies would be a benefit!
4	Daily, short, text format	4	
5	This could be very impactful but only if invested in sufficiently to make it aesthetically engaging, easy to use, and marketed well to actually reach and attract the target audience. A tougher build but could scale.	5	High impact only if extremely well executed — writing style, efficient to read, aesthetics and presentation, marketing, etc. the book should probably come after class version has been refined through multiple iterations.

If I had 200 hours to devote to addressing the goal of increasing and improving parent-child discussions about God and faith, which resource would be a better, more impactful use of my time?	If You chose Prototype #2, which format do you think is best?
Prototype 1: Intergenerational Small Group Curriculum	
Prototype 2: Some form of teaching/training (Parenting Seminar, Class Series, Video series, or Book)	Weekend Reterat
Prototype 2: Some form of teaching/training (Parenting Seminar, Class Series, Video series, or Book)	Book
Prototype 2: Some form of teaching/training (Parenting Seminar, Class Series, Video series, or Book)	Weekly Class

What have I missed? What final thoughts are on your mind? Would you like to qualify or explain your answers to the format questions? Your input is valuable to me. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and instincts.

My answer to the previous question is not consistent with my previous answers, but I believe that if you have the buy-in of a group of people the small group method would have the best opportunity for success. I don't think a typical Sunday school class setting would accomplish your goal; but a small group would. Within a small group, you'd have the opportunity to practice and discuss the different units. The group would be small enough to actively engage in the conversations that would help us grow as parents who seek to help children grow in their faith and reliance on the God who calls is his.

If the small- group is not an option, I believe the next best option is the seminar option. For this curriculum to have a lasting impact on families as they seek to grow, time is needed; time for you to share your knowledge and time for discussion of what these changes in habits might look like in our homes and in our community.

I think it looks great! I'd love to apologize again for the time elapsed before I actually got around to looking at it. This is a subject that I think has been a struggle for leaders and parents for a very long time, and though I don't know that any one thing can "fix" that, I do think it's wonderful to see people thinking about and working hard to give some resources for it. Thank you!

Print is preferable to video imo. Short daily or weekly email/ texts.

I like the idea of a weekly class that includes a workbook and attached video material, all of it looking professional and elegant. Volunteer designers are available and the technology is easier than ever. If you could make it a digital workbook then you could easily gather feedback as people go through the course and refine it over several iterations. The initial scaffolding would also be in place for a fully online version and later a book. Seminars would follow later. The goal would be to get it going in the simplest way, get data, refine, then build further. I also think an accompanying podcast would be an easy, potentially high-yielding resource. You could start that now, focusing on interviews a couple times a month. I chose parent option over intergenerational option because it feels like the most urgent felt-need that is simpler at its bones. The intergenerational focus would be a great followup series after this core area is addressed.

Notes from Zoom Meeting April 27, 2022 9:30 PM

Three fathers with multiple children from birth to 14 years old participated in the call. One empty nest father who serves as a mentor to myself and many young families in the congregation also participated.

The discussion focused on the lack of interest these fathers observe from other parents in the congregation regarding involvement in children's spiritual formation. For me this was a therapeutic time, because these fathers are the ones who were most involved and appreciative of the work I did with their children and families over the past 8 years.

The recurring theme was the need to help parents understand and appreciate the role they play in the formation of their children. These fathers recognized the consumer tendencies that families are applying to children's ministry. They noted the common attitude among peers who just want to drop off their children, so they can have social and "God" time with adults and without the distraction of children.

The fathers noted appreciation for a variety of ministry moments we shared together over the years. They also spoke of the low participation in these events.

The need that kept surfacing was a way to communicate the big picture significance of the role of parents in the spiritual formation of their children, beyond just bringing them to church and dropping them off in the children's wing.

This conversation pushed me firmly in the direction of creating a teaching tool for parents that would educate and inspire.

Appendix E—Project Appendix Documentation

Included in Appendix:

- Record of Project Execution
- Readable.com Assessments
- Google Form Evaluation Surveys and Responses
- Email Records from Academic Mentors

Record of Project Execution

EXECUTION OF DOCTORAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PLAN (130 HOURS)

- First Draft of Project Delivery Plan submitted to Dr. Savage (5 hours)
- Final Draft of Project Delivery Plan submitted for final approval from Dr. Savage (5 hours)
- Preliminary work sketching a list of topics to be covered and organizing into chapters and sections (10 hours)
- Writing of Chapter 1 draft (15 hours)
- Writing of Chapter 2 draft (15 hours)
- Writing of "Developmental Theory" Draft for Section 2 (15 hours)
- Writing of "Christian Holidays" draft for Section 3 (15 hours)
- Revisions of Chapter 1 (5 hours)
- Revision of Chapter 2 (5 hours)
- Revision of "Developmental Theory" chapter (5 hours)
- Refined draft of Table of Contents (15 hours)
- Summaries of future chapters (10 hours)
- Collection and organization of data for Project Progress Report December 12 (10 hours)

EXECUTION OF DOCTORAL PROJECT FEEDBACK PLAN (30 HOURS)

- Creation of Google Form, communication with potential parent readers, distribution to parent readers and Dr. Holloway, and follow up communication for chapter 1 (10 hours)
- Creation of Google Form, distribution to parent readers and Dr. Holloway, and follow up communication for chapter 2 (5 hours)
- Creation of Google Form, distribution to parent readers and Dr. Holloway, and follow up communication for chapter 3 (5 hours)
- Creation of Google Form, communication with potential parent readers, distribution to parent readers and Dr. Holloway, and follow up communication for "Christian Holiday" chapter (5 hours)
- Assessment of four chapters using tools at Readable.com (5 hours)

EXECUTION OF DOCTORAL PROJECT FINAL REVISIONS (40 HOURS)

- Final revision of chapter 1 in response to readable.com input (5 hours)
- Final revision of chapter 2 in response to readable.com input (5 hours)
- Final revision of chapter 3 in response to readable.com input (5 hours)
- Final revision of chapter 4 in response to readable.com input (5 hours)
- Locate editor for grammar and syntax. Review suggestions and make final corrections before submission. (4 hours)
- Communication and feedback from academic mentors via phone and email (2 hours)
- Special attention given to documentation of end notes (2 hours)
- Establish contact with additional readers, solicit feedback, and respond to suggestions (5 hours)
- Interview with a parent reader for feedback (1 hour)
- Insert project into project template. Read and make edits to correctly adapt to formatting and style of the project template (15 hours)

Readable.com Reports

CHAPTER 1



Text readability report generated on 2023-01-18 12:25.

Readability Grade Levels		ReadablePro Rating		Text Quality		
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	5.69	A		Spelling Issues	13	1%
Gunning Fog Index	8.27			Grammar Issues	10	6%
Coleman-Liau Index	7.27	Readability Scores		Sentences > 30 Syllables	6	4%
SMOG Index	9.26	Flesch Reading Ease	76.37	Sentences > 20 Syllables	56	35%
Automated Readability Index	5.20	CEFR Level	C2	Words > 4 Syllables	8	0%
FORCAST Grade Level	9.13	IELTS Level	8+	Words > 12 Letters	2	0%
Powers Sumner Kearsley Grade	4.98	Spache Score	3.67	Writing Style		
Rix Readability	6.00	New Dale-Chall Score	3.78	Passive Voice Count	5	1%
Raygor Readability	5.00	Lix Readability	30.73	Adverb Count	50	3%
Fry Readability	6.00	Lensear Write	87.84	Cliché Count	0	0%

- ① Text aimed at a general public audience should be around grade 8 to 10.

Text Statistics

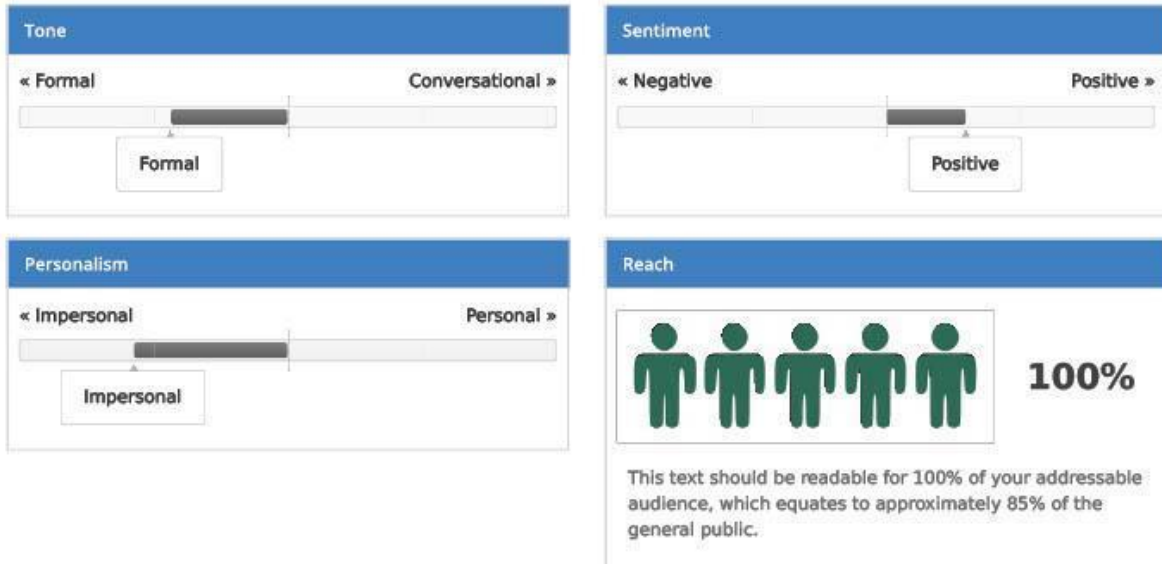
Text Composition		
Adjectives	145	7%
Adverbs	47	2%
Conjunctions	174	9%
Determiners	253	13%
Interjections	8	0%
Nouns	582	29%
Proper Nouns	55	3%
Prepositions	236	12%
Pronouns	225	11%
Qualifiers	20	1%
Verbs	291	15%
Unrecognised	8	0%
Non-Words	0	0%

Text Statistics	
Character Count	8538
Syllable Count	2749
Word Count	1973
Unique Word Count	679
Sentence Count	158
Paragraph Count	33

Text Statistics Averages	
Characters per Word	4.3
Syllables per Word	1.4
Words per Sentence	12.5
Words per Paragraph	59.8
Sentences per Paragraph	4.8

Timings	
Reading Time	8:46
Speaking Time	15:47

Content Composition



Keyword Density

Keyword Density - 1 Word		Keyword Density - 2 Words		Keyword Density - 3 Words	
I	2.81%	It is	0.30%	through a multitude	0.10%
is	1.86%	the Shema	0.25%	the first word	0.10%
was	0.70%	part of	0.20%	on your children	0.10%
have	0.60%	I want	0.20%	multitude of moments	0.10%
Shema	0.60%	I am	0.20%	life is hard	0.10%
guitar	0.50%	to be	0.15%	in a world	0.10%
The	0.50%	that is	0.15%	a world that	0.10%
God	0.45%	our children	0.15%	a multitude of	0.10%
time	0.40%	of parenting	0.15%	I learned to	0.10%
children	0.40%	my grandfather	0.15%	I knew that	0.10%
As	0.40%	is never	0.15%	Gallagher and Son	0.10%

CHAPTER 2



Text readability report generated on 2023-01-18 13:38.

Readability Grade Levels		ReadablePro Rating		Text Quality		
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	6.42	A		Spelling Issues	3	0%
Gunning Fog Index	8.43			Grammar Issues	12	8%
Coleman-Liau Index	8.03	Readability Scores		Sentences > 30 Syllables	13	8%
SMOG Index	9.63			Sentences > 20 Syllables	63	40%
Automated Readability Index	6.18			Words > 4 Syllables	18	1%
FORCAST Grade Level	9.31			Words > 12 Letters	0	0%
Powers Sumner Kearsley Grade	5.01			Writing Style		
Rix Readability	6.00			Passive Voice Count	10	1%
Raygor Readability	6.00			Adverb Count	29	1%
Fry Readability	6.00			Cliché Count	0	0%
		Flesch Reading Ease	73.04			
		CEFR Level	C2			
		IELTS Level	8+			
		Spache Score	3.80			
		New Dale-Chall Score	3.73			
		Lix Readability	31.15			
		Lensear Write	83.78			

- ① Text aimed at a general public audience should be around grade 8 to 10.

Text Statistics

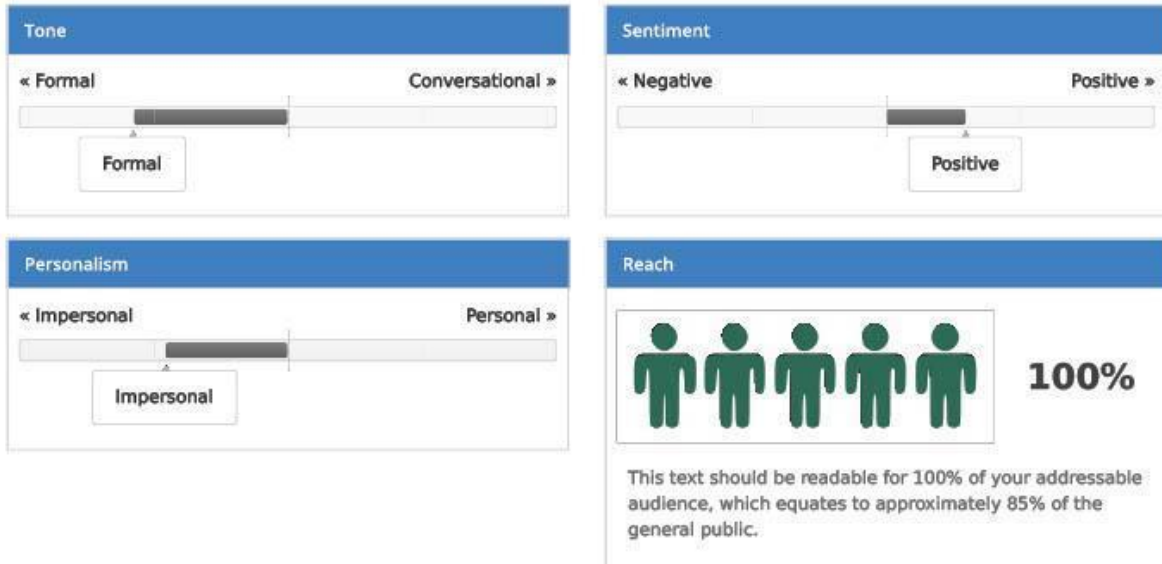
Text Composition		
Adjectives	144	7%
Adverbs	31	1%
Conjunctions	195	9%
Determiners	275	13%
Interjections	4	0%
Nouns	663	31%
Proper Nouns	102	5%
Prepositions	289	14%
Pronouns	216	10%
Qualifiers	10	0%
Verbs	289	14%
Unrecognised	17	1%
Non-Words	0	0%

Text Statistics	
Character Count	9356
Syllable Count	3003
Word Count	2115
Unique Word Count	722
Sentence Count	156
Paragraph Count	27

Text Statistics Averages	
Characters per Word	4.4
Syllables per Word	1.4
Words per Sentence	13.6
Words per Paragraph	78.3
Sentences per Paragraph	5.8

Timings	
Reading Time	9:24
Speaking Time	16:55

Content Composition



Keyword Density

Keyword Density - 1 Word		Keyword Density - 2 Words		Keyword Density - 3 Words	
is	1.32%	of God	0.61%	the people of	0.19%
God	1.22%	the people	0.33%	the Promised Land	0.19%
Moses	1.13%	people of	0.24%	the heroes of	0.14%
people	0.80%	is not	0.24%	the Ten Commandments	0.14%
not	0.80%	forty years	0.24%	the Red Sea	0.14%
are	0.80%	Promised Land	0.24%	of the Ten	0.14%
The	0.80%	the Promised	0.19%	of the Promised	0.14%
has	0.66%	Ten Commandments	0.19%	in the wilderness	0.14%
have	0.52%	Red Sea	0.19%	the book of	0.09%
faith	0.52%	Moses has	0.19%	the Old Testament	0.09%
We	0.52%	Do you	0.19%	We believe that	0.09%
God's	0.52%				

CHAPTER 4



Text readability report generated on 2023-01-18 17:40.

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	7.90
Gunning Fog Index	10.35
Coleman-Liau Index	10.50
SMOG Index	11.15
Automated Readability Index	8.25
FORCAST Grade Level	10.11
Powers Sumner Kearsley Grade	5.47
Rix Readability	8.00
Raygor Readability	8.00
Fry Readability	8.00

ReadablePro Rating	
A	

Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	62.94
CEFR Level	C2
IELTS Level	8+
Spache Score	3.96
New Dale-Chall Score	4.80
Lix Readability	39.37
Lensear Write	79.83

Text Quality		
Spelling Issues	2	0%
Grammar Issues	3	2%
Sentences > 30 Syllables	14	9%
Sentences > 20 Syllables	77	51%
Words > 4 Syllables	7	0%
Words > 12 Letters	11	1%

Writing Style		
Passive Voice Count	2	0%
Adverb Count	16	1%
Cliché Count	0	0%

- ❶ Text aimed at a general public audience should be around grade 8 to 10.

Text Statistics

Text Composition		
Adjectives	158	8%
Adverbs	20	1%
Conjunctions	178	9%
Determiners	268	13%
Interjections	6	0%
Nouns	682	33%
Proper Nouns	55	3%
Prepositions	293	14%
Pronouns	175	8%
Qualifiers	5	0%
Verbs	284	14%
Unrecognised	11	1%
Non-Words	0	0%

Text Statistics	
Character Count	10001
Syllable Count	3174
Word Count	2067
Unique Word Count	699
Sentence Count	150
Paragraph Count	33

Text Statistics Averages	
Characters per Word	4.8
Syllables per Word	1.5
Words per Sentence	13.8
Words per Paragraph	62.6
Sentences per Paragraph	4.5

Timings	
Reading Time	9:11
Speaking Time	16:32

Content Composition



Keyword Density

Keyword Density - 1 Word		Keyword Density - 2 Words		Keyword Density - 3 Words	
are	1.40%	this stage	0.39%	In this stage	0.19%
children	1.16%	want to	0.34%	the work of	0.14%
is	1.11%	this chapter	0.34%	the teen years	0.14%
will	0.77%	our children	0.29%	the ability to	0.14%
stage	0.63%	In this	0.29%	of the story	0.14%
Piaget	0.63%	your child	0.24%	of Piaget Erikson	0.14%
stories	0.58%	the story	0.24%	we watch them	0.10%
child	0.58%	the group	0.24%	watch them interact	0.10%
not	0.48%	are not	0.24%	twelve year old	0.10%
group	0.48%	This is	0.24%	them interact with	0.10%
In	0.48%	they will	0.19%	In this chapter	0.10%

CHAPTER 8



Text readability report generated on 2023-01-18 17:40.

Readability Grade Levels		ReadablePro Rating		Text Quality		
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	7.90	A		Spelling Issues	2	0%
Gunning Fog Index	10.35			Grammar Issues	3	2%
Coleman-Liau Index	10.50	Readability Scores		Sentences > 30 Syllables	14	9%
SMOG Index	11.15			Sentences > 20 Syllables	77	51%
Automated Readability Index	8.25	Flesch Reading Ease	62.94	Words > 4 Syllables	7	0%
FORCAST Grade Level	10.11	CEFR Level	C2	Words > 12 Letters	11	1%
Powers Sumner Kearsley Grade	5.47	IELTS Level	8+	Writing Style		
Rix Readability	8.00	Spache Score	3.96	Passive Voice Count	2	0%
Raygor Readability	8.00	New Dale-Chall Score	4.80	Adverb Count	16	1%
Fry Readability	8.00	Lix Readability	39.37	Cliché Count	0	0%
		Lensear Write	79.83			

- ① Text aimed at a general public audience should be around grade 8 to 10.

Text Statistics

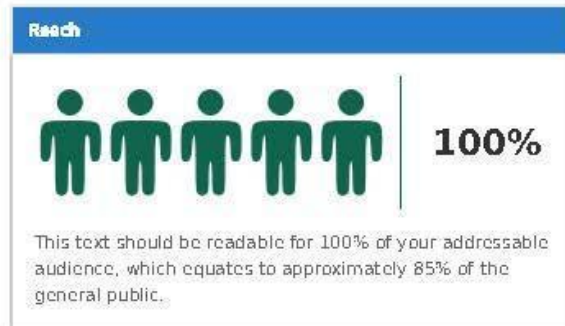
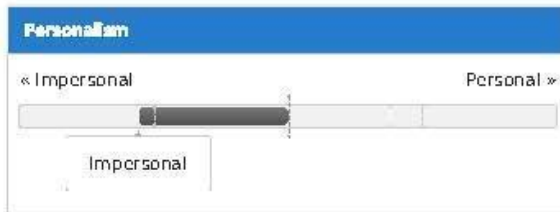
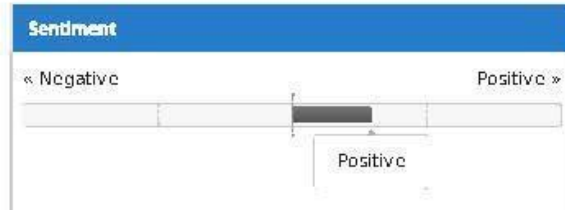
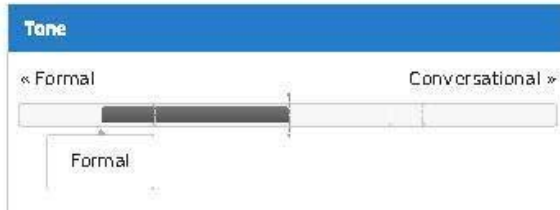
Text Composition		
Adjectives	158	8%
Adverbs	20	1%
Conjunctions	178	9%
Determiners	268	13%
Interjections	6	0%
Nouns	682	33%
Proper Nouns	55	3%
Prepositions	293	14%
Pronouns	175	8%
Qualifiers	5	0%
Verbs	284	14%
Unrecognised	11	1%
Non-Words	0	0%

Text Statistics	
Character Count	10001
Syllable Count	3174
Word Count	2067
Unique Word Count	699
Sentence Count	150
Paragraph Count	33

Text Statistics Averages	
Characters per Word	4.8
Syllables per Word	1.5
Words per Sentence	13.8
Words per Paragraph	62.6
Sentences per Paragraph	4.5

Timings	
Reading Time	9:11
Speaking Time	16:32

Content Composition



Keyword Density

Keyword Density - 1 Word	
are	1.40%
children	1.16%
is	1.11%
will	0.77%
stage	0.63%
Piaget	0.63%
stories	0.58%
child	0.58%
not	0.48%
group	0.48%
In	0.48%


Keyword Density - 2 Words	
this stage	0.39%
want to	0.34%
this chapter	0.34%
our children	0.29%
In this	0.29%
your child	0.24%
the story	0.24%
the group	0.24%
are not	0.24%
This is	0.24%
they will	0.19%

Keyword Density - 3 Words	
In this stage	0.19%
the work of	0.14%
the teen years	0.14%
the ability to	0.14%
of the story	0.14%
of Piaget Erikson	0.14%
we watch them	0.10%
watch them interact	0.10%
twelve year old	0.10%
them interact with	0.10%
In this chapter	0.10%

Google Form Evaluation Surveys and Responses

Chapter 1 Evaluation

Feedback regarding Doctoral project

wgallagher20@georgefox.edu [Switch account](#) 

*** Required**

Email *

Your email

Readability: How easy was this chapter to read? *

1 2 3 4 5

Difficult and challenging ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Easy and comfortable

After reading this chapter, how interested are you in reading more of this book? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not interested ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Definitely want to continue reading

Would you recommend this book to another parent? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
No, I wouldn't feel comfortable recommending it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Yes, I know several who would find it interesting.

Would you feel comfortable having a discussion with other parents guided by the questions at the end of the chapter? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not really	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Yes, it could be a helpful discussion

Was anything unclear or confusing about this chapter?

Your answer _____

Do you have any specific questions you would like this book to address?

Your answer _____

After reading this chapter, is there any advice or observations that might help make this chapter (and future chapters) more helpful to parents?

Your answer _____

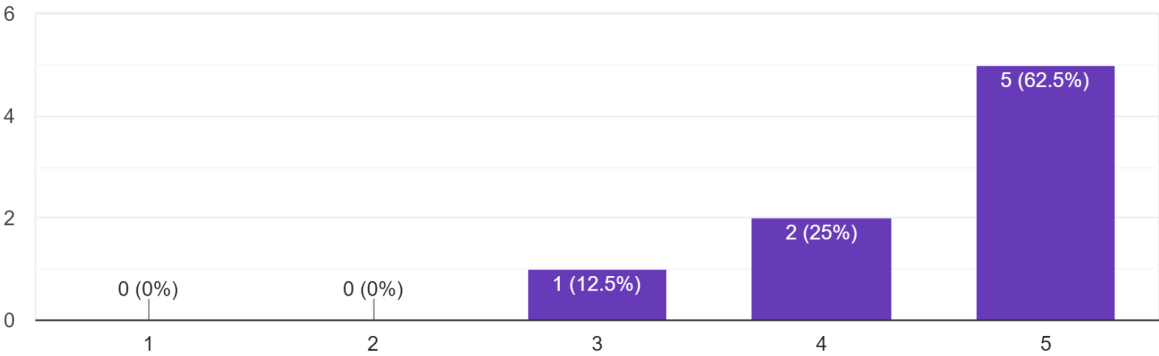
Submit

Page 1 of 1

Clear form

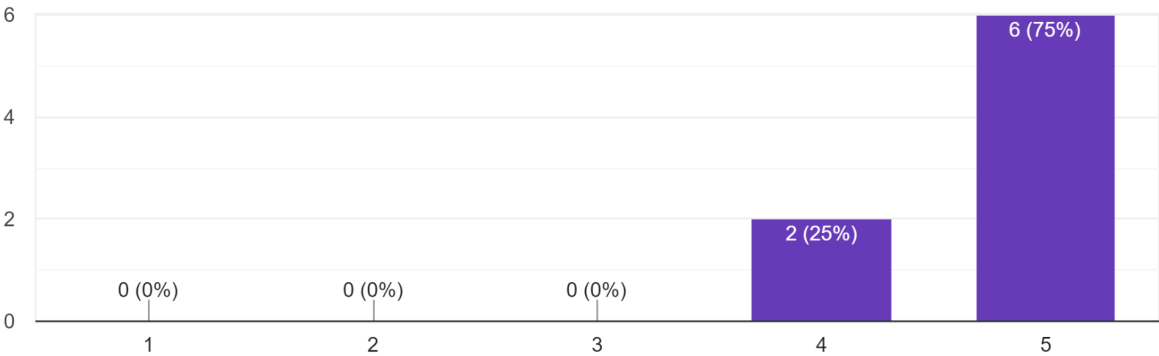
Readability: How easy was this chapter to read?

8 responses



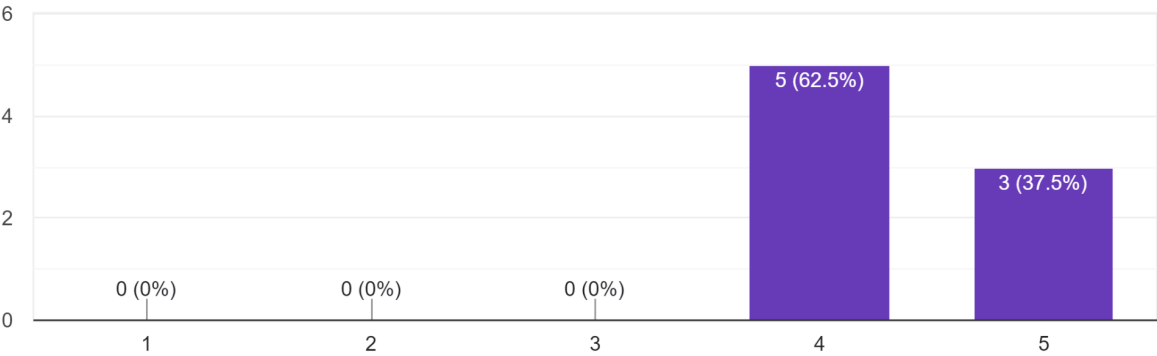
After reading this chapter, how interested are you in reading more of this book?

8 responses



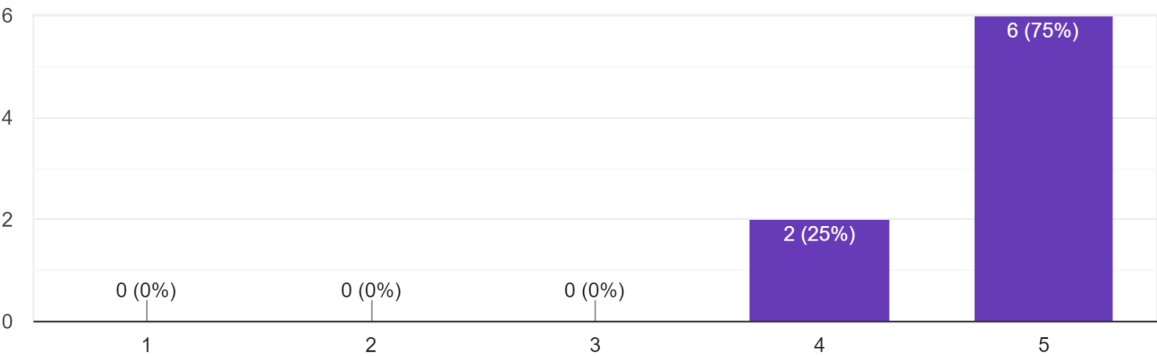
Would you recommend this book to another parent?

8 responses



Would you feel comfortable having a discussion with other parents guided by the questions at the end of the chapter?

8 responses



Was anything unclear or confusing about this chapter?	Do you have any specific questions you would like this book to address?	After reading this chapter, is there any advice or observations that might help make this chapter (and future chapters) more helpful to parents?
No, the introduction was satisfactory in setting up the theme and purpose of the book for the reader.	Not at the moment other than practical examples/ideas and how best to naturally incorporate times of study or conversation depending on the size of the family.	The first paragraph feels like it could be tightened up a bit more. Further into the chapter the pacing seems to be quicker or more natural. I feel like I hear your voice better later on than at the beginning.
The first 5 paragraphs were a little wordy. I think it should be condensed. I didn't start to really get sucked in until the second page.		
I read the chapter once following work when my mind was tired and feeling a bit overwhelmed and once again when I was rested. When rested, the entire chapter flowed well. However, with the first reading the first 2 paragraphs felt a bit cumbersome with a few unneeded details.	How to handle a realization that a spiritual impression you made as a parent was wrong and harmful and how to make amends.	To reach a greater audience, it would be helpful for the recommendations to both serve parents in the the throws of parenting and those with soon to be adult children, how this impression never stops being created.
No, I love how you opened with the specific memories of guitar making and brought the conversation back to that. That pulls the chapter together and helps me focus on the message of the journey in this book to instill faith in our children.	How do we keep on instilling faith in our children in moments when our own faith is deeply shaken by the actions of people in the church?	I think the discussion questions are great and the practical suggestion for the week is wonderful. Diving into a practice of impressing upon our children love of God and people by beginning with a daily recitation of the Shema seems like the perfect place to start.

No	What or who steps in if parents are absent? How do you know or tell the means and ways of passing on the faith are working? What tools are available for encouragement?	I think a reference and some exploration of Jeremiah 6:16 could be interesting when thinking about where to start or re-engage in the parenting journey and to double down on the portion about ancient ways or paths. I also think it would be interesting to consider 1 Corinthians 11:23 as part of handing over the faith. I know this specifically relates to communion, but communion is an expression and confirmation of our faith.
No. The comparisons were clear	How to instill faith in my children when the world is so incredibly diverse and I want them to have so many diverse experiences outside of their comfort zones. I want them to be able to have faith without living in a bubble.	Maybe just a little more indication of how the book will address these difficult issues.
Our work as parents, as you observe near the end of the chapter, is never done. That means our kids are always our kids... sometimes they're 2yrs old, sometimes 12, sometimes 16, 25, 45. That is a massive spectrum of situations to address in a single book. And you may have parents coming to this book from all of them. Our role as parents is obviously very different in each of those situations. Are you planning on addressing all of those situations? Just parents of young children? Or maybe it's just something to keep in mind as you're writing... specifically who your audience is.	I'm specifically interested in issues around transition roles as a parent. Again, my role as the parent of a 3 year old looks (or should look) much different than the parent of a 13 year old, or a 23 year old. What are those transitions? Are there strategies and/or tactics to be more deliberate about helping myself prepare for and make those transitions? How do I know when those transitions need to happen? Where's the map of what to expect & when?	Very well put together. The analogies are wonderful (particularly the guitar construction metaphor). Having follow up questions is perfect and will help to focus the reader on what they need to remember.
No. Very clear.	Only to note the importance of parents being in the word themselves so that they will know what to instill on the hearts of their children	Same as above.

Chapter 2 Evaluation

Feedback regarding Doctoral project

wgallagher20@georgefox.edu [Switch account](#)



* Required

Email *

Your email

Readability: How easy was this chapter to read? *

1 2 3 4 5

Difficult and challenging ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Easy and comfortable

After reading this chapter, how interested are you in reading more of this book? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not interested ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Definitely want to continue reading

Do you find the questions and exercises at the end of this chapter helpful to you personally? *

1 2 3 4 5

No, I wouldn't feel comfortable recommending it. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes, I know several who would find it interesting.

Would you feel comfortable having a discussion with other parents guided by the questions at the end of the chapter? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not really ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes, it could be a helpful discussion

Were there specific paragraphs that seemed to drift from the theme? (Please include chapter #'s and any comments)

Your answer

What ideas needed to be developed further in this chapter?

Your answer

Any other pushback, response, question or comments about this chapter?

Your answer

Submit

Page 1 of 1

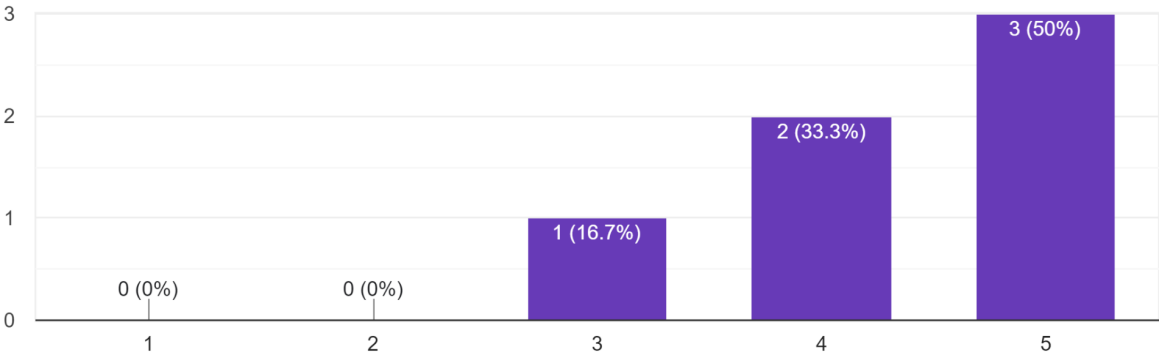
Clear form

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This form was created inside of George Fox University. [Report Abuse](#)

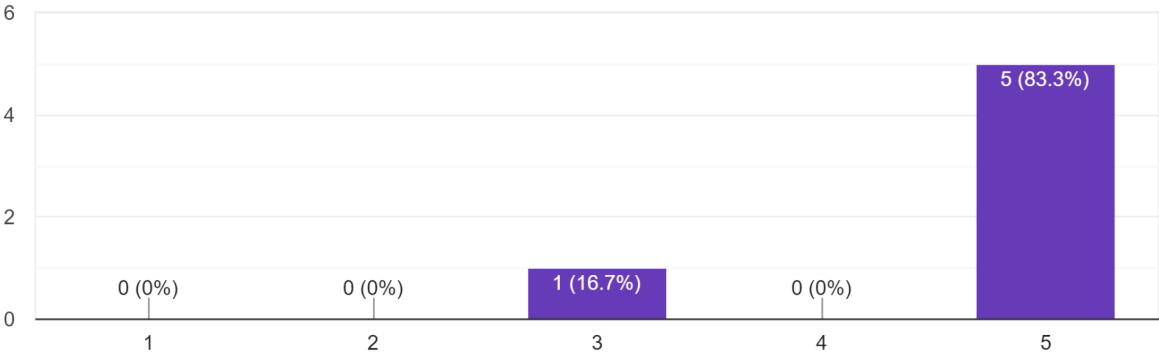
Readability: How easy was this chapter to read?

6 responses



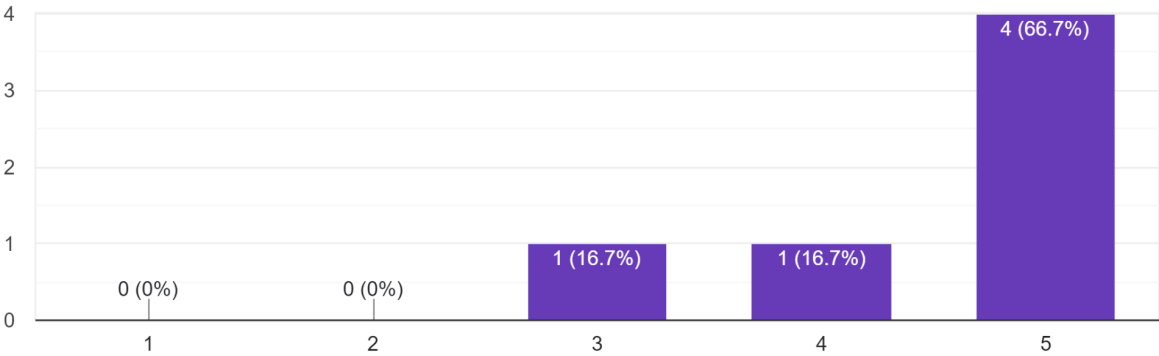
After reading this chapter, how interested are you in reading more of this book?

6 responses



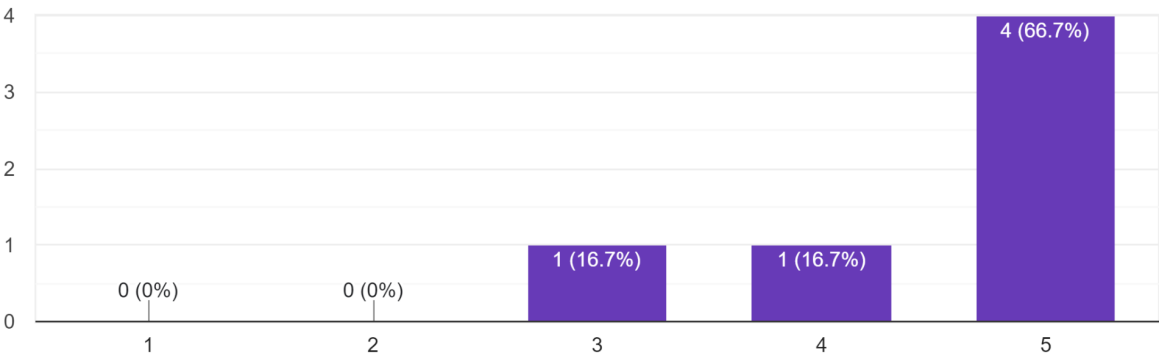
Do you find the questions and exercises at the end of this chapter helpful to you personally?

6 responses



Would you feel comfortable having a discussion with other parents guided by the questions at the end of the chapter?

6 responses



Were there specific paragraphs that seemed to drift from the theme? (Please include chapter #'s and any comments)	What ideas needed to be developed further in this chapter?	Any other pushback, response, question or comments about this chapter?
9 seems to be the continued thought and point of 8. 15 might not be needed as you convey the subject to be heavy and you can empathize.	I don't have any at this time.	Some words like anachronistic might take a quick google.
	There seems to be a jump from paragraph 8 to paragraph 9. Maybe there could be a sentence added to the beginning of paragraph 9 that connects the idea that while we are not witnesses to the things we read, we are part of God's story. And then, you could have your sentence about our first place in the story.	In paragraph 1, consider revising the sentence that starts "Sure,..." It may need to be combined with the following sentence. "While my wife and I will still have one high school student, two in middle school, and a fourth grade daughter in our home when school starts next fall, I am increasingly aware that my children are growing up. My lifelong role as their parent is shifting." ?? Also, in paragraph 19, I was confused at first about what title you were referring to when you said, "Do you know what that title means?" I realized when I reread the chapter that you were talking about the title of the book- Deuteronomy, but that might need a little more explanation.
Not at all... in fact I think they were all spot on and concise.	I feel like it's an extremely central idea that this is not just a nice story that we are told and pass along... but it is an ongoing real-life history that we are currently a part of... and so are our children. This could certainly be developed more.	I really like how you open the chapter with a personal story that is relatable and illustrates the topic at hand. Then using the metaphor of Moses & the Israelites is brilliant. I'm not sure how relevant this is, but all through this chapter a particular scene from The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King was on my mind... it's the battle of Minas Tirith, and Pippin says "I didn't think it would end this way.". Gandalf's responses are rich with "big-picture" meaning.

	Maybe elaborate more on the origin of the Shema and why it was introduced to God's people in the first place. I look forward to learning more of how I can better teach my kids to pray and what prayer truly means.	There was one typo. At the bottom of page two the word is leaned instead of learned.
	Maybe a few real life stories of how to pass your faith onto the next generation.	Two words I did not understand or know the meaning of anachronistic and progeny.

Child Development Chapter Evaluation

Feedback regarding Doctoral project

wgallagher20@georgefox.edu [Switch account](#)



* Required

Email *

Your email

Readability: How easy was this chapter to read? *

1 2 3 4 5

Difficult and challenging ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Easy and comfortable

Does the first paragraph work as an introduction to this chapter? *

1 2 3 4 5

No ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes

Is this chapter worth the time to read it? Did you gain insights into your own child * as you read?

1 2 3 4 5

No, not the info I want it this book ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes, it helped me connect some dots and gain understanding about my child

Do you find the questions and exercises at the end of this chapter helpful? *

1 2 3 4 5

No, I didn't relate to the questions. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes, the discussion guide seems to be moving me toward application.

Was section on Piaget clear and concise? What did you find helpful? Confusing?

Your answer _____

Was section on Erikson clear and concise? What did you find helpful? Confusing?


Your answer _____

Was section on Fowler clear and concise? What did you find helpful? Confusing?

Your answer _____

Any other pushback, response, question or comments about this chapter?

Your answer _____

Submit  Page 1 of 1 [Clear form](#)

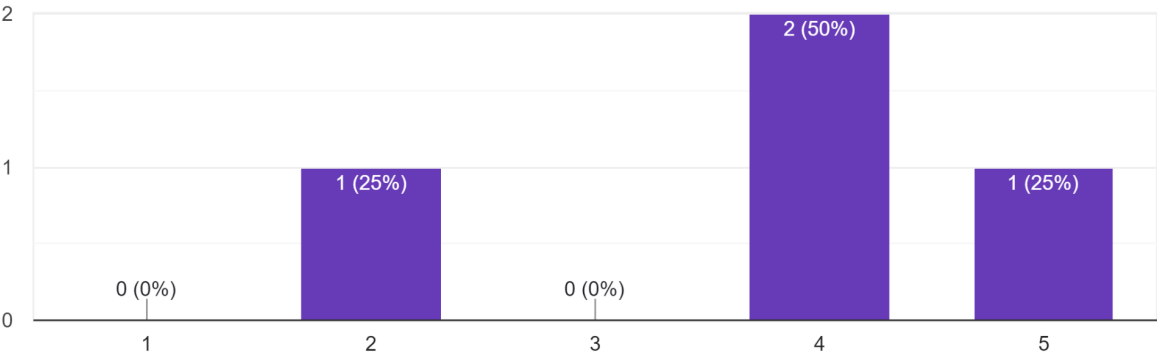
Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This form was created inside of George Fox University. [Report Abuse](#)

Google Forms

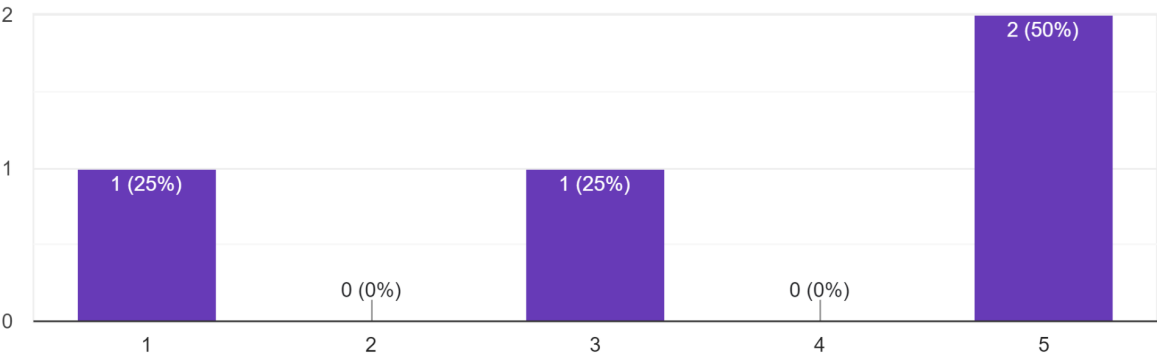
Readability: How easy was this chapter to read?

4 responses



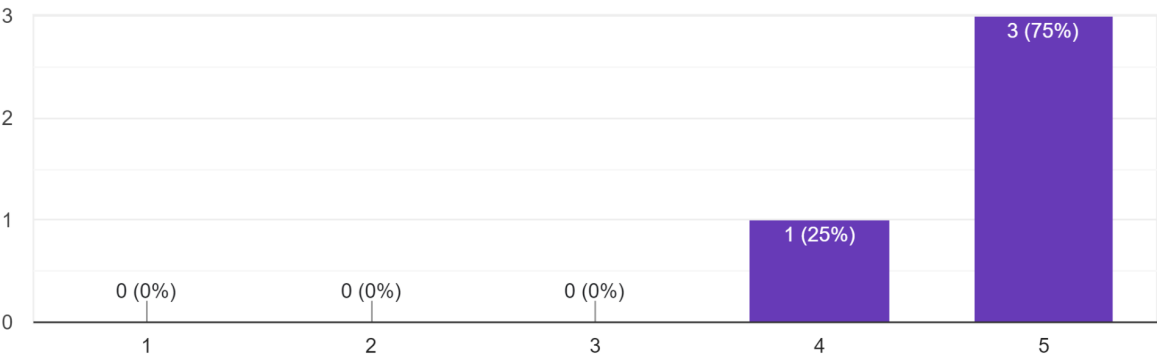
Does the first paragraph work as an introduction to this chapter?

4 responses



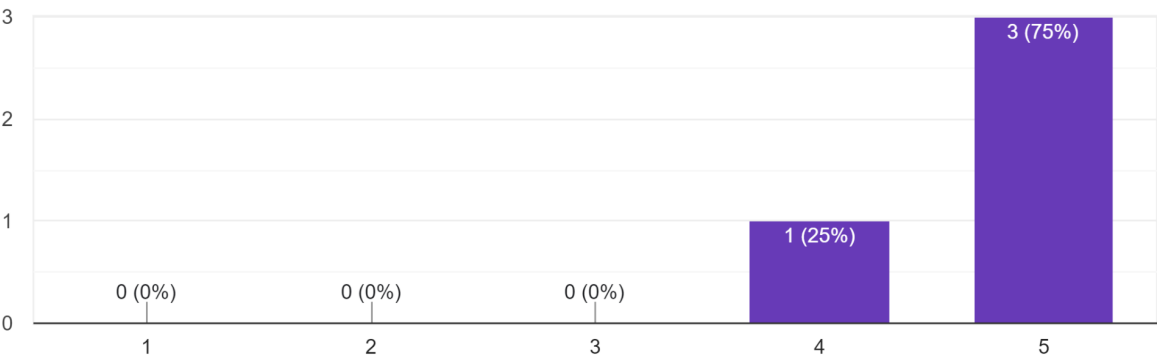
Is this chapter worth the time to read it? Did you gain insights into your own child as you read?

4 responses



Do you find the questions and exercises at the end of this chapter helpful?

4 responses



Was section on Piaget clear and concise? What did you find helpful? Confusing?	Was section on Erikson clear and concise? What did you find helpful? Confusing?	Was section on Fowler clear and concise? What did you find helpful? Confusing?
The subject matter and theory is very common to my understanding at a macro level. This chapter shapes those high level theories a bit better. The examples help solidify the concepts in a clear way. This section was not difficult.	Yes, the same clear concepts were easy to grasp and foreshadowing the application that will follow in other chapter(s). It was fairly straightforward	Kind of. This chapter was harder to understand. It is a heady chapter but I found it was hard for me to keep track of the concept of the stages name "Mythic-Literal Faith" and "Synthetic-Conventional". My brain fatigue probably played a bit. I felt like this section was lacking super easy examples like in the Piaget section. The last sentence of the chapter was super helpful to bring me back to what you wanted to use from Fowler's concepts.
Yes, it was very clear. This part is what I found most helpful: "When we want to teach our children at this age, it is important that we start with the concrete. If we tell the story well, they will intuitively understand its meaning. We want to encourage discussion about the meaning, because it will help them internalize and generalize the learning, but that will be the second step."	Yes, it was clear and concise without seeming overly simplified. This is the part I found most helpful: "Preteens need to feel competent to have a sense of belonging to a social group. Just to be clear, your local church and the church universal, are primary social groups to which we want them to connect."	I am unfamiliar with Fowler, but I found the information clear and concise. I imagine that some more conservative readers might push back on the term "myth" to refer to stories. I was not confused, just concerned that some would refuse to process that paragraph based on one word. :(
very. absolutely made sense. I feel like this material is pretty intuitive for any parent that has interacted with a small child, but I've studied Piaget before. definitely good to keep it in.	Erikson was the most challenging for me. I feel like (with my sons particularly) that I have not provided or helped them develop enough ways for them to contribute to the family, secular community, or church community. Nothing confusing here... just challenging.	I feel like the Fowler section could be developed a bit more, particularly the third stage (synthetic-conventional) ... not so much in the explanation of the theory, but in the implications - "what it looks like". Perhaps an example?
Using the story about justice made this section even more clear to me. That makes sense as how children can better grasp concepts through the sue of stories.	Recognizing the balance between choosing your words and actions with children. They sense when you are not being authentic or fully truthful.	I can see my own daughter at this stage currently as she is making her faith her own. Being able to take what she has learned and seen in others in order to start to make her own beliefs is fun and rewarding.

Any other pushback, response, question or comments about this chapter?

This chapter is my favorite so far. Partly because i'm nerdy and want to know the "why" but because this stage is very much real for my kiddos development. I had a lot of clarity for past experiences with the Happy Haven girls in how and why, when we got them it was really hard to change their ways of thinking because they are not in their formative years. Another part in the chapter that really helped clarify what i've been struggling with is where Fowler introduces the "Mythic-Literal Faith" concept. Clay has been wanting to get baptized for a little over a year going on 2 years. Liz and I have struggled a bit at what to do about his request and determining what his motives and even maturity to understand what he's requesting. I've explained to him that I'm really excited about wanting to be baptized but it is a big responsibility and mommy and daddy want to help you make a great choice but about a year ago we balked and told him we thought it was best to revisit at a later time (basically he's not displayed the maturity nor was able to verbally explain they purpose of baptism and why he wanted (lack of abstract)) Clay's asked persistently this past month so I've really wanted to honor his request by having him have personal study time in where he looks up verses to study specifically baptism. Over the past few times he's been able to only give me literal recounting of the story but the lack of being able to explain the abstract makes sense even though he knows the inferred he hasn't figured out how to verbalize that unaided. Fowler's concept helps me understand that, while yes, he's in a phase of his maturity, he understands more about the choice and importance of baptism than what he can communicate. I have a lots more to say there but this new understanding will help guide me through our study and mostly likely a new baptism soon! Thanks Wes. I truly appreciate your purposefulness, love and hard work that you display in your life for your self, family and the church body.

This chapter is great! I can't wait to read more.

My favorite sentences from the chapter are the following:

"The role of spectator is not conducive to drawing our children into the community of God. To consider themselves a part of something a preteen must contribute to the work of the organization. Perceiving a role in the group is key for a teenager in continuing in that group. This must inform our practices."

Amen and Amen to that!!

I thought the first paragraph metaphor of wood used in guitar bodies as children was reasonable... but it feels like there should be something better (not sure why).

Also, I think the Erikson section cannot be emphasised enough. It strikes me that this is something that has been lost in both secular and church culture in the US & Europe.

I think the questions & challenges at the end of the chapter are also crucial for someone that wants to make change in their life and the way they're raising their children (I'm speaking to myself here). I think so many parents are on auto-pilot... these provide a way for them to engage again.

I understand this chapter can seem a bit "heady", but I personally love this sort of thing. I think it's very good to provide the warning (and permission to excuse oneself) at the beginning of the chapter though. Definitely keep that.

I am not much of a science person so even though this chapter provided some really good insight and background it did not fully resonate with me. Others on the other hand will probably want more of it.

Holiday Chapter Evaluation

Feedback regarding Doctoral project

wgallagher20@georgefox.edu [Switch account](#)



* Required

Email *

Your email

Readability: How easy was this chapter to read? *

1 2 3 4 5

Difficult and challenging ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Easy and comfortable

Does the first paragraph work as an introduction to this chapter? *

1 2 3 4 5

No ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes

Do you find the questions and exercises at the end of this chapter helpful? *

1 2 3 4 5

No, I didn't relate to the questions. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes, the discussion guide seems to be moving me toward application.

This chapter is slightly longer than the others. (2,700 words) Did it feel long? Were there any parts that drug or felt disjointed? How was the flow?

Your answer _____

Did this chapter inspire you to consider new practices for your family? Or, did it remind you of the significance of practices you are already doing? Is it practical enough or does it need more specific ideas?

Your answer _____

Does this chapter feel like it should come first or last in section 3? My initial thought was first, but as I wrote I wondered if it would be better at the end after other specific practices (story telling, getting preteens involved in church activities, serving, etc.).

Your answer _____

The first paragraph is intended for the first "application" chapter. I think it is important for readability sake to maintain some threads like the guitar shop in my story telling, but I don't want to force connections. What is your feedback on this paragraph?

Your answer

Any other pushback, response, question or comments about this chapter?

Your answer

Submit

Page 1 of 1

Clear form

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This form was created inside of George Fox University. [Report Abuse](#)

Google Forms

Readability: How easy was this chapter to read?	Does the first paragraph work as an introduction to this chapter?	Do you find the questions and exercises at the end of this chapter helpful?
5	5	5

This chapter is slightly longer than the others. (2,700 words) Did it feel long? Were there any parts that drug or felt disjointed? How was the flow?	Did this chapter inspire you to consider new practices for your family? Or, did it remind you of the significance of practices you are already doing? Is it practical enough or does it need more specific ideas?	Does this chapter feel like it should come first or last in section 3? My initial thought was first, but as I wrote I wondered if it would be better at the end after other specific practices (story telling, getting preteens involved in church activities, serving, etc.).
I felt like it was the right length for the material needing to be covered. I enjoyed how you intertwined personal with traditional stories.	Not growing up with many of these spiritual traditions at church it has been inspiring to introduce these spiritual holidays to my children. I am learning right along with them.	Alignment at the end makes sense because it continues to give action steps for our children. Learning the why first then encourages our kids to know why they need to participate in these activities.

<p>The first paragraph is intended for the first "application" chapter. I think it is important for readability sake to maintain some threads like the guitar shop in my story telling, but I don't want to force connections. What is your feedback on this paragraph?</p>	<p>Any other pushback, response, question or comments about this chapter?</p>
<p>I believe this keeps the personal touch to the book. Each story is well represented and makes sense. Plus it ties everything together.</p>	<p>I enjoy both aspects of these holidays and believe they can both coexist. However, I am learning to emphasize the spiritual side of things more because ultimately that is what I want my girls to know and learn.</p>

Correspondence with Academic Mentors

Feedback from academic mentor and expert in children's spirituality:

Wes, I just got to this today..
Wes, your work looks great. The table of contents works well.

I appreciate your well-stated purpose on p. 30: *The focus of this book is helping parents create memorable experiences, encourage meaningful dialogue, and develop formative relationships with their pre-teen children.*

I particularly like the thought questions for discussion at the ends of the chapters.

You did an excellent job reducing the Piaget, Erikson, and Fowler material to brief, understandable, memorable paragraphs.

The holidays chapter works and makes several points well.

An aside: I particularly liked your work "pre-live" (p. 26) and the reference to guilt coming home in the diaper bag!!!

You have outlined a doable, needed project and have made an amazing amount of progress. Your plan looks good. Blessings as you continue the writing.

Two small things:

1) I found your tone a tad preachy or directive in a couple of places (e.g., p. 27: Let's make today the first day in a new phase . . .)

2) On p. 36, the last sentence is a bit overstated: "Teens desire to conform to the shared identity of their faith community, and unless thoroughly convinced otherwise will revert to the traditional commitments of the group." They may not revert to traditional commitments--it may look different when they settle in.

Blessings on your continued work, Wes.

The following are chapter by chapter email responses from my academic mentor who is an expert in writing accessible books for the church.

Screenshot of email response to first chapter by mentoring author.

Wes, this looks great. Let me make a few suggestions:

1. I attach how I would simplify. See if this helps, if not ignore.
2. A few notes on content:

The guitar illustration is great. However, should you say something about the brand on our children being :The Lord's Child. Parents are just part of his craftsmanship. This ties well with the Shema.

You might also talk about how craftsmanship has to be learned through repetitive practices (like the Shema) just like parenting.

You might also want to have a note about each child being unique and not from an assembly line.

My thoughts. Use if helpful.

Screenshot of email response to second chapter by mentoring author.

Here are my edits.

Screenshot of email response to Development Theory chapter by mentor author.

This is a very good chapter. You summarize well. I made few edits.

By the way, Fowler was one of my teachers at Emory.

Screenshot of email response to Holiday Chapter by mentor author.

I really like this chapter. I think it is especially needed in Churches of Christ.

Attached are my edits and comments,

The following correspondence is from a specific discussion regarding the suggestion to remove the language of “mythic literal” from the discussion of James Fowler’s work. Initially, I added a few lines explaining the use of myth in this context, then with the advice from my academic and writing mentor, I removed that language altogether.



Wes Gallagher <wgallagher20@georgefox.edu>

Added Paragraph??

5 messages

Wes Gallagher <wgallagher20@georgefox.edu>
To: wesgallagher8@gmail.com

Thu, Dec 8, 2022 at 11:00 PM

I am contemplating an additional paragraph in the section on Fowler. Two different comments inspired this. First, there is the issue of “myth” as a trigger for Christians who may take offense and feel that they are being charged with believing a made up story.

Second, the big words used to describe Fowler’s stages are unfamiliar and require clear explanation.

Does the italicized paragraph below improve the flow, or just create unnecessary repetition and confusion?

Thanks for your discernment on this.

--

In Him,
Wes Gallagher

James Fowler stands on the shoulders of Piaget, Erikson, and others, to build his theory of faith development. Fowler’s second stage “Mythic-Literal Faith” encompasses 10-12 year olds. In simpler terms, when these children *listen* to stories (myth) they *hear* the real (literal) message or teaching of the tale. He notes that in this stage children gain the ability to create their own stories that carry meaning. Students are drawn to stories that deliver historical facts and backgrounds about their family or community. With Piaget he recognizes that children are not ready to draw the abstract meaning out of the story, yet they grasp it in a concrete, literal way.

A brief note about terms seems appropriate here. For many of us the word “myth” carries the connotation “untrue.” To grasp Fowler’s point, we need to adjust our perception of this term. Think of myth simply as the story that carries meaning for a group. For Fowler to refer to the Christian story as a myth does not mean he is labeling it as untrue. Rather, he is recognizing that our sacred stories carry much weight and deliver to us both our mission and ethic. Preteens innately grasp the missional and ethical implications of our stories even if they struggle to explain those values in abstract terms.

In this stage, children develop the ability to consider the perspectives of others. They develop a perception of God as an independent human-like being capable of compassion and empathy. As they begin to see the world through the eyes of others, they begin to imagine how God looks at them. Children in this state connect deeply with “symbolic and dramatic” materials and can retell the stories presented to them in thorough detail.

@gmail.com> Thu, Dec 8, 2022 at 11:09 PM

To: Wes Gallagher <wgallagher20@georgefox.edu>

I think that is a great addition! I think it will help confront and dispel any bias or confusion that arises due to intentionally or unintentionally misunderstanding the term "myth" in the context of your chapter.
[Quoted text hidden]

To: Wes Gallagher Fri, Dec 9, 2022 at 7:21 AM
<wgallagher20@georgefox.edu>

Why not just call it his second stage and avoid the mythic language altogether?
[Quoted text hidden]

Wes Gallagher <wgallagher20@georgefox.edu> Sat, Dec 10, 2022 at 10:00 AM

That makes sense. I can just describe the stage with my own language and avoid the dance.
[Quoted text hidden]
--
-Wes

To: Wes Gallagher <wgallagher20@georgefox.edu> Sat, Dec 10, 2022 at 10:43 AM
Cc: wesgallagher8@gmail.com

Yes, I think those changes are good.

--

[Quoted text hidden]

Bibliography

- Allen, Holly Catterton. *Intergenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*. Abilene: ACU Press, 2018.
- Allen, Holly Catterton, and Christine Lawton. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Amidei, Kathie, Jim Merhaut, and John Roberto. *Generations Together: Caring, Praying, Learning, Celebrating, & Serving Faithfully*. Naugatuck, CT: LifelongFaith Associates, 2014.
- Assis, Elie. "Family and Community as Substitutes for the Temple after Its Destruction: New Readings in Psalms 127 and 133." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 85, no. 1 (April 2009): 55–62.
- Beckwith, Ivy. *Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.
- Bengtson, Vern L., Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris. *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations*. Reprint ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Berryman, Jerome W. *Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education*. first paper back ed. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995.
- Block, Daniel I. *Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012.
- Borgo, Lacy Finn. *Spiritual Conversations with Children: Listening to God Together*. Illustrated ed. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2020.
- Borgo, Lacy Finn. "Spiritual Direction with Children the Next Natural Step in the Christian Historical Progression of Children's Spiritual Formation." DMin diss., George Fox University, Portland, OR, 2016. Digital Commons at George Fox University.
- Boyatzis, Chris J. "The Co-Construction of Spiritual Meaning in Parent-Child Communication." In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research and Applications*, 182–200. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2004.
- Boyatzis, Chris J., and Denise L. Janicki. "Parent-Child Communication about Religion: Survey and Diary Data on Unilateral Transmission and Bi-Directional Reciprocity Styles." *Review of Religious Research* 44, no. 3 (March 2003): 252–70.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy*. Annotated ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011.

- Bruner, Ron. "Living Deuteronomy 6: Parenting as a Spiritual Discipline," in *Along the Way: Conversations About Children & Faith*. ed. Ron Bruner and Dana Kennamer Pemberton. Abilene: ACU Press, 2015.
- Clark, Chap, ed. *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Coles, Robert. *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Reprint ed. Boston: Mariner Books, 1991.
- Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, edited by Robert L. Hubbard Jr. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Crane, Scott. "Intergenerational Formation as a Tool for Main Line Protestant Revitalization." DMin diss., George Fox University, Portland, OR, 2020.
- Csinos, David ed. *Faith Forward*. Vol. 3, *Launching a Revolution through Ministry with Children, Youth, and Families*. Kelowna, Canada: Woodlake Publishing, 2018.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy, and Ron Foster. *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. Nashville: Upper Room, 1998.
- DeClaissé-Walford, Nancy L. *The Book of Psalms*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Edited by Robert L. Hubbard Jr., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014.
- Desrosiers, Alethea, Brien S. Kelley, and Lisa Miller. "Parent and Peer Relationships and Relational Spirituality in Adolescents and Young Adults." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 3, no.1 (January 2011): 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020037>.
- De Mol, Jan, Gilbert Lemmens, Lesley Verhofstadt, and Leon Kuczynski. "Intergenerational Transmission in a Bidirectional Context." *Psychologica Belgica* 53, no. 3 (2013): 7–23.
- Dollahite, David C., and Jennifer Y. Thatcher. "Talking About Religion: How Highly Religious Youth and Parents Discuss Their Faith." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 611–41.
- Elliot, Lynn Barger. "Generational Theory and Faith Communities." In *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, ed. Holly Cotterton Allen (Abilene: ACU Press, 2018), 73-84.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993.

- Flor, Douglas L., and Nancy Flanagan Knapp. "Transmission and Transaction: Predicting Adolescents' Internalization of Parental Religious Values." *Journal of Family Psychology* 15, no. 4 (2001): 627-45.
- Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1995.
- Free, Jamee. "In the Way They Should Go: Nurturing the Relational and Spiritual Nature of Children." DMin diss., George Fox University, Portland, OR, 2017. Digital Commons at George Fox University.
- Garland, Diana R. *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.
- German, Brian T. "Contexts for Hearing: Reevaluating the Superscription of Psalm 127." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 37, no. 2 (December 2012): 185-99.
- Goldingay, John. *Psalms 42-98*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, edited by Tremper Longman III. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Goodman, Michael A., and W. Justin Dyer. "From Parent to Child: Family Factors That Influence Faith Transmission." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 12, no. 2(2020): 178.
- Greenman, Jeffrey P. "Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective: Classic Issues, Contemporary Challenges." in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspectives*, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.
- Hay, David and Rebecca Nye. *The Spirit of the Child*. rev. ed. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006.
- Henley, Karyn. *Child-Sensitive Teaching: Helping Children Grow a Living Faith in a Loving God*. 4th ed. Nashville: Child Sensitive Communication, 2011.
- Holloway, Gary and Earl Lavender. *Living God's Love: An Invitation to Christian Spirituality*. Abilene: Leafwood, 2004.
- Holt, Nicholas A. and Douglas A. Kleiber, "The Sirens' Song of Multiplayer Online Games." *Children, Youth, and Environments* 19, no. 1 (2009): 223-44.
- Jones, Timothy Paul. *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011.

- Kor, Ariel, Steven Pirutinsky, Mario Mikulincer, Anat Shoshani, and Lisa Miller. 2019. "A Longitudinal Study of Spirituality, Character Strengths, Subjective Well-Being, and Prosociality in Middle School Adolescents." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019) 377.
- Lanker, Jason. "The Family of Faith: The Place of Natural Mentoring in the Church's Christian Formation of Adolescents." *Christian Education Journal* 7 no2 (2010): 267–80.
- Lodge, Kane. "Who Coined the Term 'Social Media' First?" Giraffe Social Media, April 27, 2015. <https://www.giraffesocialmedia.co.uk/who-coined-the-term-social-media-first/> Accessed 5/21/22 at 8:22 AM
- MacDougall, Alistair. "Intergenerational Dynamics in Deuteronomy." In *Engage All Generations: A Strategic Toolkit for Creating Intergenerational Faith Communities*. ed. Cory Seibel. Abilene: ACU Press, 2021.
- Madeleine J. George and Candice L. Odgers, "Seven Fears and the Science of How Mobile Technologies May Be Influencing Adolescents in the Digital Age," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 6 (2015): 832–51.
- McCoy, Wilson. "All Ages Learning Together." In *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, edited by Holly Allen 151-161. Abilene, Texas. ACU Press, 2018.
- McKnight, Gary. "Equipping Parents for the Spiritual Formation of Their Children." In *Exploring and Engaging Spirituality for Today's Children: A Holistic Approach*, edited by La Verne Tolbert, 91–104. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014.
- Miller, Lisa. *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*. Reprint ed. New York: Picador, 2016.
- Miller, Patrick D. "Psalm 127: The House That Yahweh Builds." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7, no. 22 (February 1982): 119–32.
- Okholm, Trevecca. "Re-Forming a Kingdom Worldview: Exploring Spirituality with Families Through the Christian Church Year." In *Exploring and Engaging Spirituality for Today's Children: A Holistic Approach*, edited by La Verne Tolbert, 81–90. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014.
- Padilla-Walker, Laura M., Sarah M. Coyne, and Ashley M. Fraser, "Getting a High-Speed Family Connection: Associations Between Family Media Use and Family Connection," *Family Relations* 61, no. 3 (2012): 426–40.
- Parrett, Gary A., S. Steve Kang, and J. I. Packer. *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church*. Illustrated edition. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2009.

- Perraud, Liz. 2018. "The Art of Christian Relationships." In *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, edited by Holly Allen, 231–36. Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press.
- Piaget, Jean, and David Elkind. *Six Psychological Studies*. Translated by Anita Tenzer. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.
- Piaget, Jean, and Barbel Inhelder. *The Psychology Of The Child*. 2nd edition. New York: Basic Books, 1969.
- Powell, Kara E., Chap Clark, John Ortberg, and Jim Candy. *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Posey, Catherine. "'I Hope That One Day I Can Understand': Early Adolescents Defining Spirituality Through Their Writing, Artwork, and Discussion." In *Exploring and Engaging Spirituality for Today's Children: A Holistic Approach*, edited by La Vern Tolbert, 257–66. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers 2014.
- Rideout, V. and Robb, M. B. "The role of media during the pandemic: Connection, creativity, and learning for tweens and teens." San Francisco, CA: Common Sense, 2021.
<https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/research/report/8-18-role-of-media-research-report-final-web.pdf>
- Schwartz, Kelly Dean. "Transformations in Parent and Friend Faith Support Predicting Adolescents' Religious Faith." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 16, no. 4 (2006): 311–26.
- Scruton, Roger. "Hiding Behind the Screen," *The New Atlantis*, no. 28 (Summer 2010): 48–60.
- Siebel, Cory. *Engage All Generations: A Strategic Toolkit for Creating Intergenerational Faith Communities*. Abilene: ACU Press, 2021.
- Smith, William George, and Wilbur Fields. *Old Testament History: An Overview of Sacred History and Truth*. Joplin, Mo: College Press, 2006.
- Stonehouse, Catherine. *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998.
- Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Parenting: How Raising Children Shapes Our Souls*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Tucker W. Dennis, Jr. and Jamie A. Grant. *Psalms, Volume 2*. The NIV Application Commentary edited by Terry Muck. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018.

- Turner, Robin Michelle. "Children's Faith Formation as Mutually Transforming Opportunity: Leading Systemic Change." DMin diss., George Fox University, Portland, OR, 2019. Digital Commons at George Fox University.
- Valkenburg, Patti M. and Jochen Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18, no. 1 (2009): 1–5.
- Vanderwell, Howard. *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute: 2008.
- VanGemeren, Willem A. *Psalms*. The Expositors Bible Commentary, edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. rev ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2008.
- Westerhoff, John H. *Will Our Children Have Faith?* 3rd rev ed. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2012.
- Wilhoit, James C. *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Yust, Karen Marie. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Zack, E.A. "Infant Transfer of Learning Across 2D/3D Dimensions: A Touch Screen Paradigm." PhD diss., Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 2010. Georgetown University Library Repository.
<https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/553228/zackElizabeth.pdf?sequence=1>
- Zizek, Boris. "Digital Socialization? An Exploratory Sequential Analysis of Anonymous Adolescent Internet-Social Interaction," *Human Development* 60, no. 5 (December 2017): 203–32.
<https://doi.org/10.1159/000479082>.