



Establishing the Home Pt 1: The Question of Family Integration

January 10, 2010

Foundational Texts: Deut 6:1-12, Eph 6:1-4

- Friends, today we embark upon a journey...a journey to answer a question....is Family Integration for CRCC?
- It is my intent to unpack this movement within the Body of Christ, and share why **I do believe God is moving us towards it.**
- I also want to say that for me, the principles of Family Integration were a "duh" moment! In other words, once I heard them, I was like "Duh, why didn't I see that!"
- So I began to study. Much of what we will talk through comes from other preachers and leaders who have blazed this trail before us. I'll give you the sources as we go.
- But I will say that I'm as excited and as confident as I've ever been that God has His mighty hand upon us! Get ready, get ready, get ready....God is about to do an OLD THING! LOL

How the Question came about:

- As you all know, God has been leading our church towards something different over the last few years. In that process of redefining success and recapturing the Gospel message, we've also reviewed our ministry to family and children.
- That review was difficult. Why? Because I did not like what we saw.
- In Voddie Baucham's Book, Family Driven Faith, he quotes an alarming statistic: that 70-88% of "Christian" teens leave the faith by the end of their second year of college.
- The statistics also show us that despite all our programs, most youth (and nearly 50% of adults) do not have a biblical worldview. (More on worldview later.)
- But one of the key questions (and complaints) we have gotten over the years is "what does your church do for my family?" (Or, your church doesn't do enough for various age groups.)
- In other words, the contemporary model says we must separate people by age for discipleship to occur. But did you know that age segregation in churches in America is new (about 150 years old), and that for most of church history, families worshiped and learned together?
- And then there was the continual problem of men not leading their families and the Christian home sounding and feeling more worldly as the years go by.
- All this led to much confusion on my part. All we were doing was what other churches did. So why didn't we see better results?

Flaws in the Contemporary Church Model

- The truth is "other" churches report the same issues as we found: youth leaving the faith, the pressure to entertain everyone, lackluster marriages, and frustrated pastors.
- All the various models out there (The Event Model, the Entertain Them model, the Charismatic Youth Pastor Model, etc.) have failed at a rate from 70 to nearly 90%!

- Then I was having a discussion with one of our leaders, and he said something to me that may in fact change our church forever. He said, "Pastor, I recently heard a preacher say that there isn't any Scripture in the Bible for Youth Ministry."
- The funny part is it did not take me long (like 5 seconds) to say, "You know, he is right!"
- So we began to look at Scripture for the answers....

Initial thoughts on Deut 6/Eph 6

1. God commands parents (particularly Fathers) to teach their children at home.
2. The first command is to teach them who God is and to love Him with all our hearts.
3. Parents are to impress (or teach diligently) their own children in the training and instruction of the Lord.
4. To fail in that is to produce a generation(s) who forgets God!
5. The results of this "home training" were to be multi-generational. God's plan was for the Faith to be passed on from parents to children.
6. Please note that in Ephesians, Paul addresses children as if they are hearing__ the letter being read!
7. It would seem then, that the church is supposed to Equip, Encourage, and Expect this home-based Kingdom expansion...not try to replace it!

What is Family Integration? *(Thanks to Grace Family Church in Texas for this information!)*

- Family integration is the embodiment of the belief that the most basic context for the believers which make up Christ's church is the family. Additionally, it is founded on the principle that God has ordained the family as the most fundamental institution of all human society. When families break down, so do cultures and nations.
- Family integration strives to create a church whose practices and ordinances strengthen families. If a church is populated by weak or loosely bound families, then sooner or later, the church will struggle and falter. What structure can withstand the challenges of our world with a foundation that is crumbling?
- In light of this need to preserve and protect the family, many Family Integrated Churches decide not to offer separate Sunday school or children's church classes. Why? The absence of Sunday school or children's church means that families sing together, pray together, learn together, and grow together. Everything is done with and through families. We think this is the best form of youth ministry and discipleship training.
- Additionally, we encourage family members to grow within their Biblically defined roles by providing specific teaching and opportunities to put into practice the lessons learned. It is this kind of family-based spiritual development that we believe enables families to live out the discipleship principles taught in Deuteronomy 6.

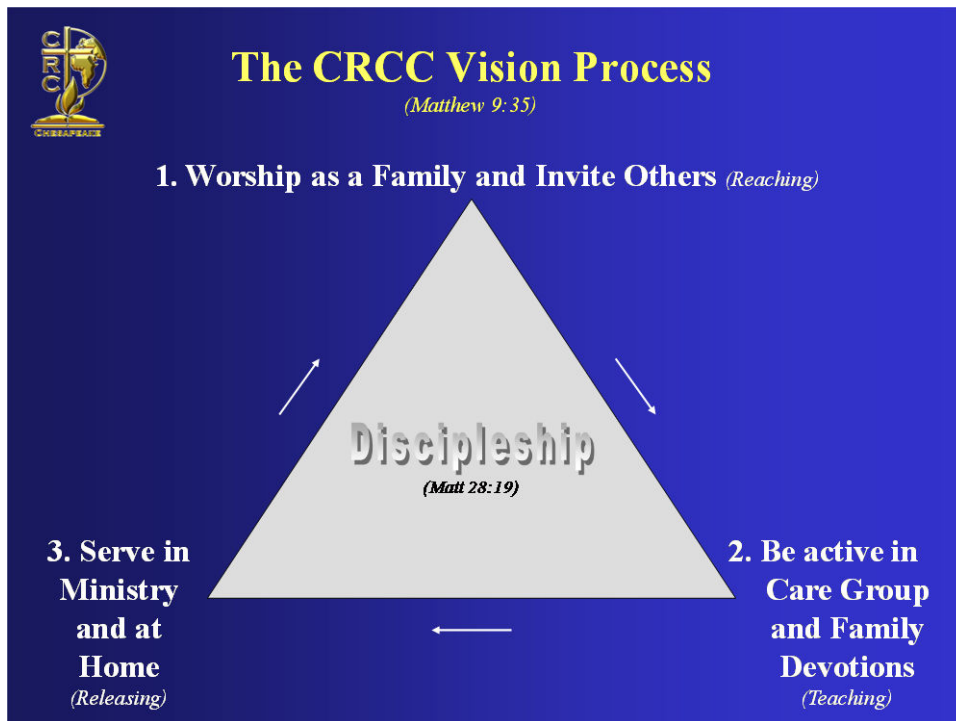
Why Family Integration?

- The family is an integral part of the unfolding of God's eternal purpose for the redemption of sinners. This salvation has been passed on in great measure to the succeeding generations of parents who faithfully disciple the children God gives them. Therefore, the biblical order and unity of the family are crucial to the stability and health of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- **Statistics clearly support that when parents disciple their own children, an overwhelming majority of those children remain in the faith after leaving home. However, when that job is delegated to the church staff, a similarly overwhelming majority leave the faith.**
- Why do they leave the faith when they leave the home? Why are children disconnected from their parents' faith?
- J. Richard Fugate comments on this disconnectedness in *What the Bible says about Child Training*: "This [generation] gap exists only to the extent that parents do not inculcate their standards into their children. A child who is totally left to himself will develop a set of standards based on his own will and nature plus any outside influences he may have accepted. These influences are those whom he has accepted for his own authorities, such as: teachers, celebrities, members of his peer group, or dynamic leaders of some cause. His self-imposed standards separate him from his parents; and, as they gradually lose control, the gap widens."
- The generation gap is widened with the age-based segregation and fragmentation common in most churches today. The typical family experience on Sunday morning is one filled with separate classes, separate social influences, and many times separate worship experiences. In the age-segregated experience, children are constantly bombarded with competing influences which often seem more compelling and attractive than mom and dad. How can parents compete? We believe they shouldn't have to.
- Family integrated churches recognize the need to protect families from being broken apart so that the parents remain the primary influence in the children's lives. **When the hearts of the children are turned toward their parents, true discipleship can happen, and the key to a multi-generational vision for Christ's church is established.**

What would it mean for CRCC?

- Family integration runs counter to the prevailing winds in our culture. Everywhere you look, temptations exist to break away from God's design for the family and for His church. It is a daunting task to think about rejecting cultural norms where appropriate and walking in a way that may seem a bit peculiar.
- In a church where programs for youth and age-segregated ministries aren't there, the parents are the only ones left to take the leads in discipleship and training. This is unusual territory for many of us because so much of our spiritual and educational experiences have historically been characterized by turning our children over to the "the experts". However, no one knows or loves children more than their parents, and God commands parents to take the lead in whole life discipleship in places like Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6.

- For CRCC Family Integration would mean adherence to the way God has been leading us, restructuring our discipleship process, and shifting youth ministry to family ministry where CRCC helps and advises parents, and promotes the family worshipping together.



Assignment this week:

1. Finish Voddie's book if possible.
2. Pray we hear God!

Next week we'll look at some benefits of this movement and talk through some common questions about it.