



**Greater Sydney SDA Conference**

## **Collaborate**

### **'Collaborate Family + Church'**

**Michael Chanley + The Group of 34**

**Ministers Label Publishing, 2010**

Deut 6:6-7, Psalm 78:5-7, Matt 28:19-20, Eph 6:4

When you follow this thread of scripture it is easy to discover that God's plan is to partner with the work of the family and the work of the church to disciple children.

Churches everywhere are desperately searching for how to best help families raise Christ-centered kids in our increasingly Christ-critical culture.

The stakes are high. Research indicates we are losing the battle for the hearts and souls of thousands of our church-raised kids. As they enter college and career, they are leaving their faith commitment behind.

### **What is the church to do?**

#### **Who is responsible for the spiritual development of a child?**

How you answer that one question alone will have major implications for how you see ministry to families and the children within them.

The big frustration - How do we get parents to become the primary spiritual voices in their children's lives? How can we get them to ask 'What did you learn?' rather than. 'Did you have fun?' How do we get them to become initiators rather than responders?

"My focus is now on developing small groups that help parents be parents, within a community of other parents, and so raise healthy, Christ-devoted kids. My goal is simple: to connect parents and families to Jesus and one another.

#### **Parent Liaisons**

Anna J. Light – youth pastor LifeChurch.tv

- As youth pastors, our job is to reach students, but is also should include reaching their families.

- Get parents who are 'on board' to work with and liaison with other parents. Meet with them to brainstorm ideas how the ministry can more effectively impact what happens at home.
- Find parents who are passionate about the next generation and cast a vision for a parent liaison team. Explain how their time and investment could impact an entire family. Release them as parent liaisons in your ministry, and watch what God does to reach the families in your community.

### **Family Connect**

Becky Arthur – Children's Minister

- To partner with parents, we have to understand our responsibilities in light of the parents' responsibilities. This is going to be a long process because we have many years of misunderstanding to undo. Yet, it's exciting to accept the challenge of helping families more closely resemble what they were created to be.
- All church ministries need to understand their responsibilities and the necessity of equipping families.
- It must begin with the pastor teaching the congregation a biblical perspective of the family.
- Provide parent education opportunities in existing church life time spaces.
- Communicate – let parents know on a regular basis what is taught in church environments
- Create family events e.g. restructure VBS so parents are involved.
- Dedicate parents
- Backyard Bible Club – Home based meetings (weekly, some cases monthly) where families in that area join together for family worship and togetherness. Allows spiritually mature members to model to others.
- Include parents in Children's Bible Studies.

### **The Big Idea**

Brad S. Tate – teaching pastor

Modeled on Dave and Jon Ferguson's book 'The Big Idea'

- Rather than have each age group learning a separate idea we have all ministries including the worship service promoting one big idea for the week. This allows conversations in the home around the same 'big idea' that each family member is growing in.

### **Use Milestones to Connect Church & Home**

Brian Haynes (associate pastor)

- Have put in place a path of clear milestones that the church partners with parents to lead their children through.

"We equip parents to lead faith talks and capitalize on God Moments along the way to lead their child toward the next milestone... The family

and the church walk the same path, celebrating milestones along the way."

- A milestone is "an event preceded by a period of instruction from parents that celebrates a spiritual development point in a child's life."

(Milestones this church leads toward – USA context)

Milestone 1: Birth of a Baby

Milestone 2: Faith Commitment

Milestone 3: Preparing for Adolescence

Milestone 4: Commitment to Purity

Milestone 5: Passage to Adulthood

Milestone 6: High School Graduation

Milestone 7: Life in Christ

See [www.legacymilestones.com](http://www.legacymilestones.com)

- With each milestone we offer parenting training, faith talk resources and family celebration ideas.
- We work hard to teach parents four key behaviours that should become a regular part of their family life.
  - 1 – Lead Intentional Faith Talks
  - 2 – Capturing God Moments
  - 3 – Celebrating Legacy Milestones
  - 4 – Authentically Model Life in Christ

### **Four Key Church Behaviours**

- 1 – Make Adult Disciples – Lead adults to learn the Bible and live accordingly. Teach adults to make disciples.
- 2 – Equip Parents Specifically – e.g. Parents Summit.
- 3 – Be the Village – Ministry volunteers working with children and students play a vital role, adding validity to the life and teaching of parents and serving as encouragers, coaches, teachers and listeners for the next generation.
- 4 – Be the Primary Faith Influencer for many children and youth. There always will be children and youth whose parents do not lead them spiritually. In this case, the church must take the lead as the primary faith influence. When parents are not involved, the church takes the lead.

### **Embracing Family Ministry**

Carey Nieuwhof - senior pastor

- 1 – Family ministry might be the greatest opportunity the church has today. What if the most natural bridge into the world of a neighbour is not our adult service? What if it's our family ministry?
- 2 – Parents are looking for partners. They just never think of your church. What would it take for the average family in your

community to look to your church as a potential partner in effective parenting.

3 – Family ministry can synchronize your team

### **Families Serving Together**

Dick Gruber – children's ministry partner

- Have families serve in church roles together
- Have families serve together in community events/projects

### **Developing a Family Vision**

Gina McClain – Children's Ministry leader

- Help parents develop a vision for the family.
- Parents tend to default to culture's vision of a self-focused child (the well rounded child). The well-rounded approach is narcissistic in nature and ultimately teaches the child that all pursuits are for their personal benefit. Cultures vision is that the child value himself above all else. Parents embracing a God-sized vision for their family will raise a God-focuses child. The God-focused approach teaches the child that all pursuits are for kingdom benefit and not their own.
- Share ideas about how parents can create habits in their home that foster great relationships.
- Encourage parents to choose five core values that will define their family.
- Put people in their children's lives that will be an influence on their spiritual pursuits.
- Release them to dig deeper into their relationship with Christ so they may create a clear path for their kids to follow.

### **Family Worship**

Jason Houser – worship leader

- Ministry that is focused on encouraging and empowering families to engage in family worship (Read and discuss the Bible, pray and sing).
- Equip parents with knowledge, tools and encouragement
- Model what it looks like for a family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to practise family worship
- We need to equip parents with both tangible tools and consistent encouragement e.g. weekly handouts on the main theme that give simple ideas for family worship.
- Model family worship – is a lot more effective than any book, speech or video. We want to model for them behaviours that most of them did not see in their homes as children:
  - How to pray with and for your kids
  - How to lead a devotion time with your family
  - How to study the Bible together
  - How the father should be the spiritual leader of the home
  - What to do if the father isn't leading spiritually
  - Family worship in single-parent homes

- How to overcome obstacles in developing a family worship game plan
- How to sing praises to God together
- They run a Family Assembly as an addition to the worship service where family worship ideas are modelled, resourced and discussed plus children do interactive stations with their parents that related to the worship service.

### **Instilling a Biblical Worldview in Children**

Jim Wideman – family ministry specialist

Top ten factors for instilling a biblical worldview in children

- Always be open and honest with your children about every subject – never be too busy for questions.
- Model to Children how you want them to be when they grow up, and place other models around them
- Teach principles over facts
- Let children know that wisdom is better than money or fame
- Just because it's on TV or in a movie doesn't make it right or true
- The Bible is the word of God
- Point out wrong thinking anywhere you experience it, and don't let it lay root.
- Quote the Bible to your kids, and let them see you feed on the word constantly.
- Teach the importance of attending and being active in church

### **Family Fitness**

Michelle Romain – Health Ministry for Children

Parents who teach their kids to build a foundation for a healthy lifestyle follow the same principles necessary to build a healthy relationship with God:

- They set a good example
- They make it fun and desirable
- They have self-control
- They know we are created for a purpose

### **Where Do You Start**

Reggie Joiner – Think Orange

- If we can be more effective at engaging parents to partner in our ministries, and improve the quality of relationships in the family, we will increase the possibility of a child having a dynamic and authentic faith.
- We need to develop a strategic plan for families that is led by an integrated team.

## **What stops it?**

- Some leaders don't see the value
- Leaders are torn by competing demands as department after department insists on attention.
- Churches tend to be so over-programmed that there's simply no place for a synchronized master plan.
- Many structures reward the loudest need with disproportionate resources without putting in place the more formational processes, which might prevent crisis needs from arising.
- Staff members work too independently. They seldom meet together to plan, and even more rarely commit to starting and staying on the same page.
- Healthy ministries are interdependent, but many churches endorse and enable ministers who are self-focused.
- Ministers who are being challenged to work together may be threatened by the success of others.
- Forward thinking leaders often don't know where to start or synchronize their efforts.

## **1 - Integrate Strategy**

- Department directors function as a leadership/management team
- A common language is established to rally leaders and parents around a common strategy
- Leaders, volunteers and parents are reminded consistently of how their role contributes to the overall plan.

## **2 - Elevate Community**

- Group life is leveraged as a primary environment to help kids grow spiritually
- Small group leaders see their role as support to the parenting role, not a substitute for it.

## **3 - Refine The Message**

- A clear end in mind is established as the basis for teaching and content
- The faith development of any age group is clarified and connected to an overall share plan,
- Volunteers and parents understand and can articulate the overall teaching goals.

## **4 - Reactivate The Family**

- Parents are challenged systematically to develop practical skills to help them be spiritual leaders in their families.
- Curriculum elements are arranged so core truths can be taught at home and church in a synchronized effort.

## **5 – Have Children Experience Their Own Personal Ministries**

- Leaders and parents embrace servanthood and service as an essential part of the discipleship process.
- Specific series and curriculums are designed as catalysts to mobilize students to do ministry.
- The student ministry team creates opportunity for students to serve the community outside the church.
- Implement a plan to help students plug into specific ministries inside the church.
- Adult volunteers are committed to apprenticing students in various areas of ministry.

### **Web Resources:**

- [rethinkgroup.org](http://rethinkgroup.org)
- [theorangeconference.com](http://theorangeconference.com)
- [familytimes.org](http://familytimes.org)
- [www.cmconnect.org](http://www.cmconnect.org)
- [www.d6conference.com](http://www.d6conference.com)
- [kidmo.com](http://kidmo.com)
- [jimwideman.com](http://jimwideman.com)
- [worshiphousekids.com](http://worshiphousekids.com)