

Book Summary

It Starts At Home

A Practical Guide to Nurturing
Lifelong Faith

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Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope

“Despite an enormous investment of time and money into some of the most innovative and effective church programs in the history of Christianity, generational faith transference is in serious decline.”

Bill Hybels in the forward

Spiritual Formation at Home:

- The home is the primary context of our spiritual formation – for better or worse.
- Your relationship with your parents, especially your father, has a significant influence on how you perceive God,

Imagine describing a fresh-baked chocolate-chip cookie to someone who has only eaten stale dog biscuits. Or describing a relaxing soak in a warm bath to someone who has only experienced the bone-chilling shiver of a cold shower. Something similar happens to those raised in a troubled home. Words spoken of God, even words from the Bible, can evoke a completely different image than the one intended.

- Illustration – Four budding flowers representing children. Church programmes are the watering can. The water does little if the roots are not in the soil. You can have better and more watering cans however if the roots are not in the soil the value of the water is largely lost.

Marriage:

- Every marriage is intended to be a picture of the marriage between God and His people.
- Sadly, those who abandon their vows damage more than their own hearts. They also destroy the beautiful masterpiece that every marriage is intended to reveal to the next generation.
- “All you need is love *and intentionality*.”
- Redefine Love
- Release Expectations
- Refine Communication
- Reboot Forgiveness
- Reignite Intimacy

Parenting:

- God designed the home as the primary place that children receive spiritual instruction and experience the tangible embodiment of spiritual realities.
- Those blessed with the gift of children are called to inspire and nurture the faith of the next generation as life's greatest privilege and priority.
- The greatest threat to successfully passing on the compass of faith to our children is negligence.
- God never intended a family's faith to occur apart from local church engagement. However 'church' cannot do it alone.
“Left to do the entire job by itself, a church can only impart enough faith to inoculate kids against taking it seriously.”
- What happens at home sets the course for all that follows

- Growing in the soil of family life:
 - Beliefs,
 - Identity,
 - Character,
 - Purpose,

Leverage Legacy:

- What we do today will directly influence a multigenerational cycle of family traits, beliefs and actions – for good or bad.

Choices - Play the Odds:

- In the context of healthy relationships, children tend to embrace the beliefs and values of their parents.
- Teaching values in the context of loving, affirming relationships can be highly effective. But trying to instil values in the context of a distant or antagonistic relationship can do more harm than good.
- Our children need more than a list of precepts and principles to embrace. If we want the values we teach them to stick, we must apply heavy amounts of the glue called love.
- There are no guarantees. If God Himself accepts the possibility of rejections, so must we. None of us are perfect parents. All of us are called to do our best. The odds are in our favour if we do. But there are no guarantees.
- Need to have fun – As parents we must realize that when we play with our kids today, we are earning the right to shape their values tomorrow.

Define 'Normal':

- What we believe to be true has a direct impact on our behaviour, whether or not that belief is consistent with reality.
- A critical part of our role as parents is helping our children to develop a life map consistent with reality.
- **Imprint Period** – birth to about seven years
Children are all ears – they love games, stories, songs and other activities.
- **Impression Period** – eight to early teen years
Don't accept everything however are still highly impressionable, open to direction and influence.
Debating what we teach is a positive in this period.
- **Coaching Period** – fourteen to sixteen
Window of instruction is closing. A good coach helps people learn from their mistakes.
- Regardless of which of the three windows of development a child is in, the key is intentionality.

Intentional Grandparents:

- Those blessed with the gift of grandchildren are called to inspire and nurture the faith of the next generation as life's greatest privilege and priority.
- Affirm each child's uniqueness
- Claim teachable moments
- Love their parents – Give parents a break – affirm their Mum and Dad
- Provide a safe place to talk

Church Innovation:

Working:

- Strengthening Marriage (pre-marriage/retreats/mentoring)
- Creating intergenerational, shared experiences such as family-based small groups, parent-with-teen events, parents-with-child services.
- The church providing tools for parents to use at home with kids
- Annual sermon series on the priority of home.

Not Working:

- The lack of a church-wide strategy, making marriage and parenting an after thought rather than a core strategic target.
- Enabling 'drop off' children's ministries, because they perpetuated the 'outsourcing' of child discipleship.
- On-campus family separation – a symptom of the 'silo' ministry approach that treats everyone as individuals (or couples) rather than members of family units.
- Failing to connect the dots between a strong marriage, effective parenting and children embracing the faith.
- Just telling parents. 'It's your job' and assuming they will know what to do
- Segregating teens and parents
- Doing children's and youth ministries without the 'umbrella' of a family-centered model
- Reactive marriage ministry rather than proactive strategies
- Some church leaders failing to model strong marriages

Programs are important, but they are not the means, not the end; we need to create a church culture that drives family intentionality!

Effective Strategies:

- Empower a visionary champion for faith at home
- Build into the existing church culture
- Give 'Home' lenses to everyone
- Define success and call families to commitment
- Invest in tools for families

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