

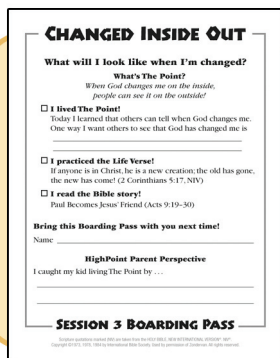
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“Give parents the resources to have faith discussions with their children by providing discussion starters and activities that go beyond the Sunday school classroom and into the home.”



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What is Family Ministry?

excerpt from Children's Ministry in the 21st Century

The church is often described as a place where the spiritual needs of all individuals are met—from birth to the grave. Historically, the church has divided families as they walked in the door. It rarely offered programs that combined children and parents to learn and grow in their faith. On the other hand, new family ministries target the family unit, helping parents and children together to grow in their relationship with each other and with God.

Psalm 78:1-7 reminds us how important it is to pass our faith to future generations—ministering to families is essential in supporting parents as spiritual teacher and mentors. As a church, we have only a limited time each week to influence kids in their faith journeys. Parents, on the other hand, have the home field advantage. Ministering to families is equipping parents for their God-given role in the home.

Family ministry is foundational in meeting the needs of the 21st-century family. A social shift in our society has placed a greater value on the needs of the family rather than the needs of the individual. The church can be a corner piece in implementing and supporting programs that fill this need. With two generations placing family time as one of the top priorities of parenthood, we can anticipate family ministry being one of the new catalysts for church growth.

Family Ministry Elements

It's time to build a ministry that has a lasting impact! Here are three targets to focus on and use as a filter as you shape your family ministry.

Parent Support—One of the primary goals of family ministry is to support parents in the important role of raising children. Many parents want to spend time with their kids. They have good intentions about talking to their kids on a deeper level. They want to share their faith. The problem is—they don't know how.

To get your family ministry to equip parents as they journey through parenthood, help parents learn how to discipline with love or talk about sex by offering classes taught by experts in the field. Teach parents how to share their faith with their children, and assure them they don't need to be a Bible scholar to do so. One of the most guilt-lifting moments for parents is when they realize it's OK to learn together and make Bible discoveries with their child. Give parents the resources to have faith discussions with their children by providing discussion starters and activities that go beyond the Sunday school classroom and into the home.

Family Support—Parents and kids sometime need a relationship jump-start. Provide opportunities for families to have fun together. Offer recreational classes such as pottery or building rockets. Plan field trips with family discounts to baseball games or the zoo. Host a board game night or spaghetti dinner so families can socialize together. Family ministry can provide a valuable lesson in the art of having fun together.

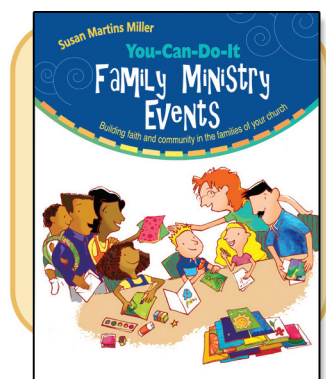
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Another essential component to family ministry is the opportunity for families to grow in their faith together. A family worship time that's kid-focused is a great way for children to share their style of music and activities with parents. Focus the teaching time of worship on what kids are learning in Sunday school to give parents a glimpse of what their children are learning. Offer classes where parents learn together on topics such as baptism or communion. Group's FaithWeaver Bible Curriculum allows families to all study the same Bible stories at the same time. Provide experiential learning opportunities for families to make faith discoveries together such as a family VBS, like Group's HolyLand Adventure vacation Bible school, or a walk-through series of thematic learning stations.

Families grow deeper in their faith when they serve together. Community service opportunities bond families together in a unique way. Serving meals to the homeless, planting a garden for an elderly resident, or cleaning up a local park allows parents and children to put their faith into action. Family ministries can provide opportunities for parents and children to reach out to others by teaching them to live out their faith.

Community Support—Family ministries can step up and meet the needs of the community by providing outreach opportunities for families. Take a look at your community and identify where there are gaps. Here are some ideas for your family ministry to reach out to the community.



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- Parents' Night Out—Provide a low-cost child care service for parents to have a date night while their children are involved in a safe and structured program.
- Family Events—Offer large events for families that target the community at large but offer an opportunity for families to have fun together. A live Nativity at Christmas or a family-oriented concert is a great way to show the community that you care about families.
- Support Groups—Many families in crisis are required by law to attend a support group. Provide a room in your church for these groups, and offer participants information on your family ministry.
- Help for Single Moms—Sponsor a car-service day for single moms, complete with an oil change and fluid check—free of charge.
- Adopt-a-Family—Your family ministry can encourage church families to adopt a needy family by providing them with gifts and a meal over the holidays.
- Sports Leagues—If your community lacks kids' sports programs, your family ministry can fill the gap. Or offer an alternative league that stresses good sportsmanship and character education.

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