



Connecting Church + Home

Writer: Jay Strother

This is a terrific interview podcast with Jay Strother from Brentwood, TN. We enjoyed hosting him in OK as he challenged our community of Children's Ministers. Here are some terrific notes he provided and I think you will find this interview helpful as you hear his heart and passion for equipping families to raise children in the Lord. -Mr. Mark

Core Conviction: We have moved away from key biblical principles that were used to shape faith in the future generations. As a Result:

- *Large numbers of teenagers who were active in church growing up are now dropping out as young adults.*
- *Research on the spiritual lives of students has revealed a surprisingly high level of interest and involvement, but a stunning lack of depth and understanding about even the most basic beliefs of the Christian faith.*
- *Dave Kinnaman of Barna Research feels that much of the ministry to the next generation in America needs an overhaul – “not because churches fail to attract significant numbers of young people, but because so much of those efforts are not creating a sustainable faith beyond high school.”*

The Response: “...the ministries having the greatest success at seeing young people emerge into mature Christians, rather than contented church-goers, are those that facilitate a parent-church partnership focused on instilling specific spiritual beliefs and practices in a child's life from a very early age. Sadly, less than one in every five churches has produced such a ministry.”

In a Family-Equipping church every practice at every level of ministry is reworked to champion the place of parents as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives. In most contexts, family equipping seeks to retain the best practices of age-graded discipleship ministries in the church while significantly elevating the role of the home in discipleship.

The Seven “distinctive marks” of a family-equipping church are:

1. The Strategic Question: How will this element of our ministry equip families to function as the foundational unit of discipleship?
2. Parenting with an external goal.
3. Parenting with an intentional plan.
4. Intergenerational interaction and appreciation.
5. Faith is taught in homes.
6. High expectations for husbands and fathers.
7. Passion for the orphans and the widows – the “visible gospel” on mission.

***For a more in-depth understanding of the Family-Equipping paradigm, see Perspectives on Family Ministry

(edited by Timothy Paul Jones, B&H, 2009) and Trained in the Fear of God: A Theology and History for Family Ministry (edited by Timothy Paul Jones, Kregel Academic, 2011).

For this tip and other ideas for Preschool & Children's Ministry visit www.mrmarksclassroom.com

