

Lesson #2: Parents are the primary spiritual care-givers of their children, but children's ministry can help equip parents in their role as spiritual care-givers.

We believe that Scripture clearly teaches that parents have the primary responsibility to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

This includes parents teaching their children about God, disciplining them, and striving to honor God before them by the example of their lives. The children's ministry team here at CHBC sees itself as a support team to parents. It seeks to aid and encourage parents in the nurturing of their children, in accordance with Scripture and the vision of our God-given elders.

It is very important for parents to realize that your church's children's ministry program isn't a way for them to out-source their own responsibility to their children, even when they feel ill-equipped or overwhelmed. The great news is that the God who calls them to this task will also equip them...and He often uses the church leaders, the children's ministry team and other members of the local church to do this.

Pastors can teach parents about their role as primary spiritual care-givers and can equip them for it:

- in their preaching and other teaching times
- in their public prayers
- by providing parenting classes, workshops and resources
- in counseling
- in conversation
- in providing an example as they raise their own children

The children's ministry team can teach parents about their role as primary spiritual care-givers and can equip them for it by:

- providing partner curriculum resources that help the parents discuss with their children at home what they have been learning in their classes at church.
- giving the parents feedback about how their children act and respond in class.
- staying connected with parents, face-to-face, through email, before and after class.
- regularly praying for the families of the church.
- exposing the parents to good resources they can use with their children, through a book stall, lending library, book fair, book reviews, etc.
- providing resources (such as kids' bulletins) and advice to parents as they help their children worship alongside of them in the worship service.
- not filling the regular church schedule so full of programs that there is little time for families to spend time together.
- providing safe child-care for their children that allows parents to learn and grow in their own classes.

Other members can teach parents about their role as primary spiritual care-givers and can equip them for it by:

- discipling each other, helping each other grow in their love and knowledge of God and His ways.
- mentoring and providing examples through older, more experienced parents inviting younger parents (or even singles or couples who do not yet have children) to come to their homes and observe them with their children.
- younger parents asking older, more experienced parents for feedback on how to best parent their children.
- sharing and praying for each other.
- serving in child-care/children's ministry classes and learning how to teach and train children.

Within the children's classes at church: parents can be supported, without being usurped, in their primary role by:

- by the witness, influence, love and prayers of other fellow, godly members for the children who teach in their classes.
- by providing the children with meaty teaching that builds upon what the parents are teaching their children can be very helpful, especially for less-mature Christian parents who need help most of all.

There has been a recent movement called "family-integrated church" that emphasizes the parents' role as primary spiritual care-givers to such an extent that it seems to exclude the local church's support in this task. I appreciate the seriousness with which people who hold this position take concerning parents' responsibility before God to teach and train their children. But, I think that Scripture clearly calls the members of the local church, under the guidance of the church leaders, to work together to encourage and equip each other in the faith. I believe this naturally includes equipping believers for their role as spiritual care-givers of their children. See the article in Appendix A for more reflections on this topic.

Lesson #2: Questions for You in Your Ministry Setting:

1. What does it mean to be a primary, spiritual care-giver of children?
2. Who do you see as the primary spiritual caregivers of the children in your church?
3. Would parents be surprised to hear that they are the primary spiritual caregivers of their children? Why or why not?
4. Would your children's ministry team be surprised to hear that they are NOT the primary spiritual caregivers of the children of the church? Why or why not?
5. How does your pastoral staff educate parents in this role? Do they do this regularly?
6. How does your children's ministry team educate parents in this role?
7. Who would your children's ministry program say is the primary caregiver of the children in your church? How does your children's ministry team's decisions, prayers and programs reflect this view?
8. Look at your weekly children's ministry program. When do your families have time to spend together?
9. How does your children's ministry program support your parents in their role....at church? at home?
10. How do you regularly connect with parents? How do you communicate with them about resources or learning opportunities for their children or for themselves as parents?
11. What (if anything) would you like to do to improve your support of the parents in your church?
12. How does your church provide or expose parents to resources to use with their children at home? What are some ways you would like to improve in this? How might you do this?