



Participant Guide



Session 1 – How Could This Happen?

I. The spiritual lives of young adults

II. The current state of evangelism and discipleship

George Barna Research:

75% of children who grow up in Christian churches, leave the church and/or the faith when they get to college.

Thom Rainer Research:

What percentage of Americans claim to be Christians and can articulate the basic message of the gospel?

Born before 1946	— 65%
Born between 1946 and 1964	— 35%
Born between 1965 and 1976	— 15%
Born between 1976 and 1994	— ___%

III. The two core causes of the generational spiritual decline

Root Cause #1: Core changes in the Christian family

A. Prior to the early 1900's, there was a clear understanding that parents and grandparents were responsible for the evangelism and discipleship of their children.

B. The 20th century saw a radical decline in the centerpiece of the Christian household – family worship.

Deuteronomy 6



Directory for Family Worship, Scotland, 1640 –

“The assembly requires and appoints ministers to make diligent search and inquiry, whether there be among them a family or families which neglect the duty of family worship. If such a family is found, the head of the family is to be admonished privately to amend his fault; and in case of his continuing therein, he is to be gravely and sadly reprov'd by the session; after which reproof, if he is found still to neglect family worship, let him be, for his obstinacy in such an offense, suspended and debarred from the Lord's supper, until he amend.

Jonathan Edwards, in his “Farewell Sermon” –

“We have had great disputes [about] how the church ought to be regulated; and indeed the subject of these disputes was of great importance: but the due regulation of your families is of no less, and, in some respects, of much greater importance. Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules. And family education and order are some of the chief means of grace. If these fail, all other means are likely to prove ineffectual. If these are duly maintained, all the means of grace will be likely to prosper and be successful.”

Matthew Henry, 1704, “Sermon Concerning Family Religion”

“The pious and zealous endeavors of ministers for the reformation of manners, and the suppression of vice and profaneness, are the joy and encouragement of all good people in the land, and a happy indication, that God hath yet mercy in store for us. Now I know not anything that will contribute more to the furtherance of this good work than the bringing of family religion into practice and reputation. Here the reformation must begin. Other methods may check the disease we complain of, but this, if it might universally obtain, would cure it.”



Charles Spurgeon, from “The Kind of Revival We Need” -

We deeply want a revival of domestic religion. The Christian family was the bulwark of godliness in the days of the puritans, but in these evil times hundreds of families of so-called Christians have no family worship, no restraint upon growing sons, and no wholesome instruction or discipline. How can we hope to see the kingdom of our Lord advance when His own disciples do not teach His gospel to their own children? Oh, Christian men and women, be thorough in what you do and know and teach! Let your families be trained in the fear of God and be yourselves "holiness unto the Lord"; so shall you stand like a rock amid the surging waves of error and ungodliness which rage around us.

C. The loss of family worship was tragically worsened in the 20th Century with the breakdown of the Christian extended family.

Root Cause #2: The loss of belief in the doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture

A. The five “solas” of the reformation

Sola Fide –
Sola Gratia –
Sola Christus –
Sola Deo Gloria –
Sola Scriptura –

B. The slippage of Scripture in action...



2 Timothy 3:16 “**All Scripture** is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

C. A brief history leading up to postmodernism

D. The four essential questions for a Christian in regards to the Bible.

1. Do you believe the Bible is God’s word?
2. Do you believe it is completely true?
3. Are you willing to submit all your thoughts and opinions on every matter of faith and life to it?
4. Are you willing to do what it says, even if you don’t want to?

E. The battle to keep the Bible out of “real life”

The cosmos

History

Morality

Government

RELIGION

Sex

Money

Marriage

Adolescence

F. The battle to mold the Bible to our opinions, rather than mold our opinions to the Bible



Session 1 Questions for Reflection/Discussion:

1. Did you grow up in a home that practiced family worship? If so, describe your experience.
2. In what ways do you see the fragmenting of extended families in our culture today?
3. Have you observed a change in how Christians today respond to the Bible? In your opinion, has the church's commitment to the belief in "sola Scriptura" been increasing or decreasing? Why?
4. What are you hoping to get out of this journey of "Never Too Late?"



Session 2 – Offer Your Heart to the Lord

I. Introduction

II. No Greater Joy – No Greater Sorrow

3 John 4, “I have no greater joy than to know that my children are walking in the truth.”

III. Two constant messages

A. It is never too late

B. Set your heart and mind clearly on the goal

Your son or daughter, loving God with all their heart, fully trusting in Jesus for their present and their future, and arriving safely home together.

IV. Four biblical steps toward winning our children

A. OFFER your heart to the Lord

B. TURN your heart to your children.

C. DRAW your child’s heart to yours.

D. POINT your child’s heart to Jesus.



The First Step: OFFER your heart to the Lord

Deuteronomy 6:4-7, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.”

Deuteronomy 32:46, “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law.”

Ephesians 4:22-24, “You were taught, in regards to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

A. Two extreme perspectives

TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY

NO RESPONSIBILITY

Ezekiel 18:20 – “total responsibility” is not biblical

Exodus 20:4-6 – “no responsibility” is not biblical



TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY
GUILT
NO _____

NO RESPONSIBILITY
PASSIVITY
NO _____

REPENT	PRAY
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B. Fervent prayer

Praying for, and requesting prayer, for what we really want!

C. Repentance

1. Representative repentance
(Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 14, Daniel 9, Nehemiah 1)

2. Individual repentance



Session 2 Questions for Reflection/Discussion:

1. What was the most meaningful thing you heard during this session?

2. Which extreme of taking “full responsibility” or taking “no responsibility” do you lean towards?

3. What are some practical ways that you can increase your focused prayer for your son or daughters spiritual life?

4. Have you ever considered practicing “representative repentance” for the unhealthy patterns in your family tree? How might you put this principle into action during the coming week?



Session 3 – Turn Your Heart to Your Child

I. Review

- A. Offer your heart to the Lord
- B. Turn your heart to your child
- C. Draw your child's heart to yours
- D. Point your child's heart to Christ

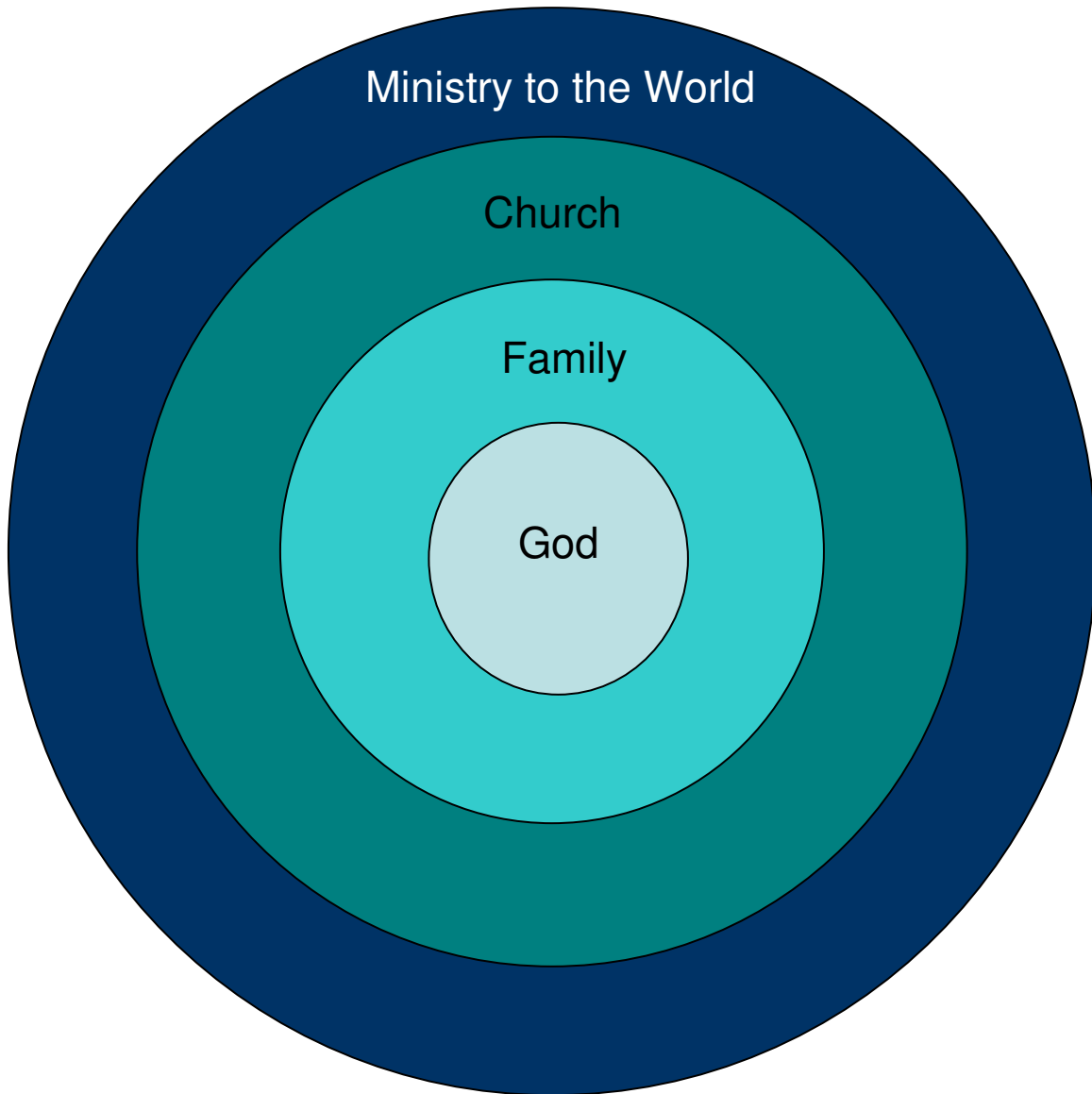
Step 2: Turning your heart to your child

A. Malachi 6:4-6

4 Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. 5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

B. Luke 1:16-17

C. Christian Life Priorities



Key Scriptures:

John 15:19

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.



2 Timothy 4:10

Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

1 John 2:15

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

D. The attack of the enemy and our culture is to pull our hearts “outward” – leaving a person “hollow” on the inside.

III. Praying for a heart of compassion

A. Matthew 9:36

B. Recognizing the spiritual battle



IV. A barrier to turning our hearts

A. Past hurt

B. Biblical forgiveness

Hebrews 12:15, Colossians 3:13

Phase 1 – Forgiveness with the will

Phase 2 – Forgiveness from the heart

Phase 3 – Reconciliation of the relationship



IV. Clarify your life's most important mission

The goal:

My son, loving God with all his heart, trusting fully in Jesus for his present and his future, and arriving safely home together.

My daughter, loving God with all her heart, trusting fully in Jesus for her present and her future, and arriving safely home together.



Session 3 Questions for Reflection/Discussion:

1. What was the most interesting/impactful thing you heard during this session?

2. Why do you think God places such a high priority on the hearts of parents being turned to their children, and the hearts of children turned to their parents?

3. Consider the four circles/priorities of the Christian life. In what ways do you struggle keeping these priorities in the right order?

4. If you have never gone through an intentional process of forgiving your son or daughter, what would be the first steps to doing that?

5. How would you rewrite, in your own words, “the goal” listed above?

Session 4
Draw Your Child's Heart to Yours
Point Your Child's Heart to Christ

I. Review of the four steps

1. Offer your heart to the Lord.
2. Turn your heart to your child.
3. Draw your child's heart to yours
4. Point your child's heart to Christ

The shortest distance between your child's heart and Christ – is YOU



You



Step 3: Drawing Your Child's Heart to Yours

Proverbs 23:24 The father of a righteous man has great joy;
he who has a wise son delights in him.

25 May your father and mother be glad;
may she who gave you birth rejoice!

26 My son, give me your heart!



II. Repairing broken foundations

A. Asking forgiveness

B. Apologizing biblically

1. Clearly state what you did or didn't do, without qualification and without excuse.
2. Declare that what you did or didn't do was wrong, and that you regret it.
3. Ask them, "Will you please forgive me?"

Don't demand an immediate answer

III. Building new foundations

A. Communicate honestly about your fear and anxiety in regards to talking with your son or daughter about spiritual things.

B. Invite your son or daughter to be honest with you about their fears and anxieties about talking about spiritual things with you.



Elevate honesty as a top value in the relationship, even if honesty means your child telling you something you don't want to hear.

C. Seek to understand before seeking to be understood

1. Do you feel like I understand you?
2. What do you believe? Why do you believe it?

Step 4: Point Your Child's Heart To Christ

A. Be not ashamed of the Gospel!

B. It is worth the risk

C. Conversation starters

1. Look for opportunities to share your stories of repentance and spiritual growth.
2. Look for opportunities to bring the conversation back to Jesus.
3. Consider using letters to create open honest dialogue about spiritual things.



4. Read and discuss a book together.

5. Ask them to HELP you be obedient to God in a way that won't annoy them or drive them away.

Conclusion



Session 4 Questions for Reflection/Discussion:

1. In what ways does our culture communicate to empty nest parents that “your time of influence has passed?”
2. How did people apologize in the home you grew up in? What steps can you take to help your family and extended family today in this area?
3. What is the hardest part about trying to have spiritual conversations with your son or daughter?
4. In this session, we talked about a variety of approaches to reconnect with your son or daughter. Which one of these approaches do you believe God would have you try first?
5. If you have gone through the journey of Never Too Late with a small group or adult class, how could your group help and encourage each other in this most important mission going forward?
6. Read Psalm 78:1-8. How could this Psalm increase your vision and passion for reaching your children for Christ?

Additional resources for your church and your family are available at:
www.visionaryparenting.com