



PHILOSOPHY OF **TRU**

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1. Mulholland, Robert M., Jr. *Shaped by the Word*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2000.



INTRODUCTION

We believe that through this curriculum, we have the unique opportunity to equip church leaders and parents to invest in the lives of children and youth during their most formative years. This opportunity is also an enormous responsibility. We desire to shape both their minds and souls in a posture that will result in a life of worship (Romans 12:1–2).

Such a life sees all aspects of existence as “spiritual” and begins to eliminate the line between sacred and secular. Every act, thought, and desire can manifest itself in worship to God. God’s desire is that we would not merely have moments or encounters of worship but that our entire life would be a living worship response to Him who is at work in and among us. We believe that the following areas are necessary components for the curriculum as we continue to discern God’s spiritual formation plan for the churches and families He entrusts to us.

> I. FAMILY AS PRIMARY

PARENTS

God has given parents the incredible responsibility of impressing a love for God on the hearts of their children (Deuteronomy 6:5–7). These impressions best occur as a natural overflow from the lives of parents who are seeking to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength. Our hope is that children’s church experience will be congruent with what is being taught at home in order to create a holistic approach to spiritual formation, uniting what children learn in the home and what they learn at church so that each setting reinforces what was experienced in the other.

The home is an essential place of spiritual formation that has often been neglected in children- and youth-centered curriculum. Sometimes parents are given small ways to interact with their child about the curriculum taught on the weekend, but it does so in a way that seems ancillary. However, we believe that parents are vital to the faith process so we have designed a curriculum that embeds the primacy of parental involvement in their spiritual nurture process both at church and in the home in meaningful and tangible ways. We believe that parents are in the best position to evaluate their child’s spiritual journey, and although it may not be a quantitative evaluation, they will be in proximity to daily life in ways to qualitatively discern growth. This type of spiritual relationship can be nurtured during the young years in a child’s life and last a lifetime.

Therefore, we will give parents the training, tools, and resources to build confidence in order to guide their children through authentic God experiences and Bible learning. In addition, we will offer parents hands-on opportunities to worship with their children prior to the weekend services, participation in the daily

blessing or early parts of the children's or youth service, an overview of the scope and sequence each quarter, guided discussion cards, and through an additional family option, materials giving them creative ideas for starting traditions, prayer, and other family fun on a weekly basis at home.

THE CHURCH

The Church has the opportunity to play a supportive role in this endeavor as it fulfills the mandate in Ephesians 4, which states that the role of the church is to equip the saints for the work of the Lord (vv. 11–13). This is the unique privilege of practitioners to come alongside parents in an equipping role. As the ministry of church shifts from being the primary spiritual learning center for children and students to a supportive ministry, they will spend more of their efforts, staffing, and resources toward empowering parents to be the primary spiritual nurturers. Many parents feel ill-equipped to receive this mantle, and it is essential that the church offer inspiration, equipping ministries/resources, and support to what will be a new role for many fathers and mothers.

This curriculum will offer materials and resources for both churches and parents to assume their God-given role. We will equip, train, and develop parents with the same intentionality we have directed toward ministry volunteers in the past.

GENERATIONS

We believe that it is the responsibility of every generation to pass down their faith to the next generation in such a way that they will be able to pass down their faith to the following generation. The essence of this statement calls into question, "What kind of faith are we passing down?" Jesus spoke of faith as the outward manifestation, or corresponding conduct, to a deep conviction or belief. He praised it whenever He witnessed it ("I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" [Matthew 8:10]) and chastised those who did not exhibit it ("O ye of little faith" [Matthew 6:30; 8:26 KJV]). In addition, it was the one thing He said that He would be looking for upon His return (Luke 18:8).

This is the way God designed for His truth to be transferred according to Psalm 78:

I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old—what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from our children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. (vv. 2–7)

Because Jesus took active and responsive faith seriously, we do too. We want to inspire this generation toward an accountability in their faith in such a way that they take responsibility for the younger generation regardless if they themselves

have children. Without understanding the enormity of this commission's importance, our generation is at risk of not passing on our faith in a way that impacts the next.

Psalm 78 also portrays a vision of this risk:

They would not be like their forefathers—a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him ... they did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them. (vv. 8,10–11)

SPIRITUALLY PARENTLESS CHILDREN

The reality is that many children don't have spiritually supportive parents or grandparents. It is our hope that by being part of the larger faith community, these children will still experience authentic, organic, and life-transforming spiritual guidance from adults in the church. After all, true religion is "to look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27). This philosophy also profoundly affects singles and grandparents within the church; as they engage in the lives of children, they have the opportunity to develop loving relationships with young people with whom they can pass on their faith and play a key role in the larger family.

> II. SPIRITUAL FORMATION

CHRIST FORMED IN YOU

The phrase "spiritual formation" comes from Galatians 4:19 where Paul writes to the churches that he longs for the time that "...Christ is formed in you." We believe that "spiritual formation," "sanctification," and "discipleship" are equivalent terms with the same aim as that of Paul in Colossians 1:28–29, "...that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (ESV). We also recognize what has been very well documented elsewhere: that today there is often no discernable difference between the attitudes and actions of those within the church community from those outside of it, especially in those who are in high school or just entering college. At best, these types of statistics are a sobering reminder of what many know firsthand: conversion to Christ is merely the beginning, and not the end, of the work Jesus wants to do in His people.

The role of the Church (the body of believers, not the institution) is to not only bring people to faith but to help bring them to maturity so that they might "... be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phillipans 2:15 NKJV).

COOPERATION WITH THE SPIRIT

Spiritual formation is built upon a regenerated life in Christ, anchored in the Word of God, and yielded to the activity of the Holy Spirit in every area of life. We are opposed to any approach to spiritual formation that is not grounded in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Human beings are lost in their sinful condition and

cannot come to salvation without the finished work of Jesus reconciling humanity to God. Knowledge of God cannot be attained by human effort alone but is grounded solely upon God's sovereign choice to reveal Himself in creation (Romans 1:18ff.), His Word (Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16), His works and incarnation (Hebrews 1:1–2), and the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14ff.; Romans 8:15–17)

Knowing God is the heartbeat of spiritual transformation. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). This knowing *of* God is different than knowing *about* God—it is primarily a pursuit of an intimate relationship with God. It is in the context of relationship with a loving God we are provoked to transformation by the Holy Spirit through the work of Christ.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines are intentional personal and corporate habits that promote the spiritual growth of both the individual and the church body. Among the spiritual disciplines we will encourage are:

- Scripture reading, meditation, and memorization (Ps. 1:2; 19:7–8; 105; 119:11; Matt. 4:4; Josh. 1:8)
- Prayer (Matt. 6:5–15; 7:7–12; 1 Thess. 5:16–18)
- Worship (Ps. 34:1–3; 100; John 4:24; Rom. 12:1–2)
- Evangelism (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:18–20)
- Generosity towards the church and the poor (1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8—9)
- Solitude and silence (intentional time spent alone with God) (Lam. 3:26, 28; Ps. 4:4; 46:10; 131:2; Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12–13)
- Confession of sin (1 John 1:8–9; Ps. 32, 51; Prov. 28:13)
- Participation in a biblical community (Heb. 10:24–25; 1 Cor. 12:12–26)

DESIRED OUTCOMES OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines are not merely ends in and of themselves. We are opposed to behavior that is rooted in acting "religious" or "spiritual" for man's approval or applause, but rather we support spiritual disciplines that are nurtured as a means to the end which Paul describes as he prayed over the church in Ephesus, that:

- we be strengthened with power in the inner person (Eph. 3:16)
- Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:16)
- we be rooted and grounded in love (Eph. 3:17)
- we come to know the extent of God's love (Eph. 3:18–19)
- we be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19)
- we be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God (Eph. 1:17)
- we have the eyes of our heart enlightened to know our hope, the riches of His glory, and the greatness of His power toward us (Eph. 1:19ff.)

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Spiritual formation does not make these realities happen; it merely puts the human will in a position to experience or discern the reality of what the Spirit has already made available to the inner person on the basis of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Spiritual formation is grounded in the Word and work of Christ and focuses on

opening the believer's heart to attend to the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit, who is continuously:

- strengthening the believer in the inner person, dwelling in our hearts through faith, and loving the believer in the depths of the heart based on the finished work of Christ (Eph. 3:16-19)
- leading and directing the children of God (Rom. 8:14)
- bearing witness that believers have received a spirit of freedom and sonship; and through Him we cry out Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15)
- interceding for the believer to be conformed into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:26–29)

THE PURSUIT OF TRANSFORMATION

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1–2)

Ultimately, spiritual formation yields a life transformed—the “weekend experience” is by no means the end goal. If the spiritually transformed life happens in the context of living daily in relationship with God and others, partnership with the home is essential.

We desire for all believers to open their hearts to experience God and learn to discern God's voice and the reality of the Spirit's work in their lives, to have a desire to obey it, and to do so in the power that the Holy Spirit offers to each believer.

> III. THE ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

HOLY SPIRIT AS TEACHER

We believe that the Holy Spirit is God's chosen teacher; it is He who causes spiritual growth and formation when and as He chooses. As such, we have articulated ten distinct environments that our curriculum will help create in the church and at home. We desire to create spiritual space, which we refer to as an environment, in which God's Spirit can move freely. Following is a brief explanation of these ten environments:

ENVIRONMENTS

1. **Storytelling:** The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate, awe-inspiring perspective of how God has moved throughout history. It further compels us to see how God is using every person's life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for His glory.
2. **Identity:** This environment highlights who we are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed, and given an

inheritance in Christ. This conviction allows children to stand firm against the counter-identities the world will offer to bring them destruction.

- 3. Faith Community:** God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which offer children an identity.
- 4. Serving:** This posture of the heart asks the question, "What needs to be done?" It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others with a cause that is bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that as Christ-followers we are to view our lives as living sacrifices we generously give away!
- 5. Out of the Comfort Zone:** As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn and experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe that this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.
- 6. Responsibility:** This environment captures the ability to take ownership for one's life, gifts, and resources before God. In addition, a child must be challenged to take responsibility for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ as well as for those who are spiritually lost. Our hope is that the Holy Spirit would use this environment to allow each child to be nurtured within a kingdom-minded worldview.
- 7. Course Correction:** This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11–13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline for a child encompasses: a) a season of pain, b) the building up in love, and c) a vision of a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.
- 8. Love/Respect:** Without love, our faith is futile. This environment recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect to be free to both receive and give God's grace. Innate in this environment is the value that children are respected because they embody the *imago dei* (image of God). We must speak *to* them, not *at* them, and we must commit to an environment where love and acceptance are never withheld due to one's behavior.
- 9. Knowing:** We live in a world that denies absolute TRUTH and yet God's Word offers just that. As we create an environment that upholds and displays God's TRUTH, we give children a foundation based on knowing God, His Word, and being in relationship with Him through Christ.
- 10. Modeling:** Biblical content needs a practical, living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. Knowledge is the "what" while modeling is the "how." This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action.

TRUE TO CONTENT AND CONTEXT

We believe that the Bible is God's final authority in our lives. Our goal is to investigate what Scripture meant to its original audience and draw out the corresponding biblical truth principle for application. We have taken a historical-literal approach to Bible interpretation and have used an exegetical approach to inductively extract out these biblical truths in order to be true to the original languages in which the

Scriptures were authored.

By using this approach to Bible interpretation, we have discerned certain narratives or doctrines to be taught at specific times in the life of a child or student in order to best represent the truth portrayed in it. For example, the story of Samson is a typical character study done during the preschool or elementary years. In these years, we tend to focus on things that will interest children of this age, such as his strength and his long hair. However, this narrative is a sad story of a leader whom God chose to be used in Israel's history, but due to his lust for Delilah, his heart was seduced away from honoring God. This story is not about strength and hair—it is about the choice we have to honor God above all else, above all other temptations. We choose to tell this story in its entirety during the high school years where we will deliberately discuss the issue of seduction and sexuality and Samson's eventual downfall because of his choices.

> IV. EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS: INFORMATIONAL VS. FORMATIONAL¹

INFORMATIONAL APPROACH

In most cases, we have adopted a modern educational system for religious education of the soul. However, we propose that the soul learns differently than the mind. So we must choose to acknowledge this in philosophy and practice since we are teaching both the mind and the soul. Sadly, we have often traded a relationship with *Abba Father* for mere Bible knowledge by using an informational approach to Scripture.

Informational: unconscious activity; taught to approach books for quantitative information: textbook/newspaper/owner's manual/blog

Content-coverage: seeks to cover as much as possible as quickly as possible and get the data needed to do what needs to be done

Linear: moving from first to second to third; movement through parts with little attention to the whole

Mastery: finite; "get our heads around it"

Control: presumption that we are the focus; the text is an object that can be made to fit our purposes; maintain distance

Analytical: critical, judgmental; result of running the text through our own filter or perception

Problem-solving mentality: instruction manual/answer book

FORMATIONAL APPROACH

Formational: the point is to encounter God in the text and for God to encounter you

Quality not quantity: stop at a sentence, a paragraph, a page; so what if it takes a year/two years/five years?

In-depth: not from an analytical perspective; moving deeper into your deep

Mastery: allow text to master you

Control: waiting on the text to shape you; let the text address you; you become the object of the text; “God, what are you seeking to say to me in this passage?”

Receptive: more than just slowing down the pace or probing the text a little deeper; an internal and intentional shift to yielding self to the text; a willingness to be obedient to whatever the text will ask of you BEFORE you know what will be asked

Openness to mystery: definition of mystery: any truth that is unknowable except by divine revelation; recognition that understanding of the text cannot be arrived at by reason alone

> V. GODLY CHARACTER FLOWS FROM A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

MORAL FORMATION

Most Christian instruction teaches kids about God. However, in many cases, the primary focus on the child has led to a focus on values or character education; lesson development starts with the question “How do we want the child to *behave* or what do we want the child to *do* as a result of this lesson?” Success (or failure) of the lesson is then measured with an outcome-based objective, as has been the pattern in secular education for several decades. This pattern has led to a focus more aligned with moral instruction rather than knowledge of God.

For today’s generation of young people, the result of this type of teaching methodology has been disturbingly disappointing. Many children instructed in the church have acquired a belief system but not a personal faith in Christ. When confronted in young adulthood with a culture that espouses a contrary belief system, what they know of faith cannot sustain them. Those who do retain the faith of their fathers (and mothers) into their adulthood usually do so not because of the church but because of the living testimony of faith they have seen in their homes.

The challenge, then, is not that we approach discipleship without goals but that we choose the *right* goals. If the goal is to have Christ formed in our children and youth (Galatians 4:19), what methods will best get us there?

Start with God—the first step in learning is bowing down to God; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.
(Proverbs 1:7 MSG)

GOD-CENTERED CURRICULUM

We are creating a distinctively God-centered curriculum. As such, the goal of every activity, Bible story, discussion, worship expression, personal application, and relationship opportunity within the curriculum is to reveal God’s character so that children and families will truly know him more and more. By crafting a curriculum that awakens curiosity, cultivates a desire to know God more, and teaches how to make meaning from God experiences, we create a generation of disciples, parents and children, who are inspired and equipped with their own hunger to grow in faith.

We need a curriculum that will foster a love of God's Word and grow up adults, youth, and children who rightly handle the Scriptures.

KINGDOM COMMUNITY

We will work together to create a kingdom community with a global perspective. We believe that the Church, Christ's beloved bride, cannot be restricted within the walls of a building or the borders of a nation. From Genesis to Revelation, God's redemptive plan is one that includes all nations. In the covenant with Abraham, all nations will be blessed (Genesis 12:3). Therefore, we intend that this belief will permeate every facet and component of our curriculum and that through it children will grow in an awareness of and love for every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Specific opportunities will be offered for children and students to respond to the global Church through relief efforts, prayer, communication, encouragement, and collaborative projects. Scripture paints a picture of what the kingdom of God will ultimately look like in all of its fullness someday. As His children, we seek to usher in His kingdom now, in part, by displaying acts of justice, mercy, celebration, peace, restoration, and reconciliation to both those who are currently part of the kingdom community and for those who do not yet know God and His great love. We pray that as children and students are awakened to the greater global community of believers that they will have an increased longing to reach out to the lost in the world in order to bring the kingdom of God to them.

> VI. HONORING THE BIG GOD STORY AND ITS REDEMPITIVE MESSAGE

THE META-NARRATIVE

We define The Big God Story as God's *entire* story ... it incorporates all of history, stretching from Genesis to Revelation and even beyond. Our God, the Alpha and Omega, has woven His redemptive plan throughout time. We hope to communicate each Bible story within the context of God's bigger story, so that the Bible doesn't become a collection of short stories or Jesus just another character. We also desire for children to understand that they not only play a part in this incredible story, but are also part of a much larger faith community of past, present, and future believers.

In the past, Christian instruction has told fragmented stories of God, Jesus, or other people in the Bible. We did so in ways that were not linear or not part of a greater narrative. Most children who know the stories of the Bible would still not be able to tell you whether Abraham was born before David, or if baby Jesus was alive when baby Moses was. What happens is that our stories are told in isolation and often don't tell the bigger life story where God is central. Instead, baby Moses is the key figure one day, Noah is the key figure one day, and Jesus is merely the key figure on another occasion. By putting each story in context of the meta-narrative, we can begin to elevate Jesus, the Redeemer, to His rightful place in the storyline.

18-YEAR SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Therefore, we have organized teaching the Bible's content in the context of its original storyline. During the preschool years, children will have the opportunity to hear a Big-God-Story perspective before they hear the particular piece of the narrative. The elementary years will be the years in which we focus on telling The Big God Story in its chronological storyline, while the teen years will give us the opportunity to take a greater in-depth look at issues and character studies referring back to the foundation and context of the greater story.

Our desire is to create an 18-year path through a comprehensive scope and sequence rooted in the Big God Story. We believe this will enable students to have an acute understanding of who God has been throughout history, who He is today, and the part they play in His story both now and in the future.

REMEMBER AND CELEBRATE

In Psalm 145:6–7, David encourages us to remember and celebrate God's character and His works:

They will tell of the power of your awesome works,
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
They will celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

This pattern is evident in Scripture from the very beginning. In Genesis, the great Creator God paused on the seventh day to remember His work and celebrate that "it was good." Passover was established for Israel so they would remember and celebrate God's great work in delivering His people from the bondage of Egypt. The law regarding the Sabbath acknowledged the need for us to suspend our human efforts and focus on the holiness of God.

From God's early history with His people, He required celebrations (feasts) to be part of the natural rhythm of life for Israel. And the New Testament record shows that Jesus and the early church kept these celebrations as well. While we are not bound to keep these feasts, knowledge of them enhances our faith. The rich symbolism of feasts gives testimony to the character of God demonstrated in His work on our behalf:

- 1. The Feast of the Sabbath:** (Leviticus 23:1–3) A perpetual celebration of worship and rest to mark God's finished work, first in Creation and then in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.
- 2. The Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread:** (Leviticus 23:4–8) A celebration of God's miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt and His ultimate deliverance of us from the bondage of sin.
- 3. The Feast of First Fruits:** (Leviticus 23:9–14) A remembrance of God's abundant provision, particularly through Christ's death and resurrection providing us with the opportunity to live an abundant life.
- 4. The Feast of Weeks and Pentecost:** (Leviticus 23:15–22) A celebration of God establishing the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai and the sending of the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower the Church.
- 5. The Feast of Trumpets:** (Leviticus 23:23–25) A celebration of God's faithfulness to His covenant promise and the future calling to Himself of all who believe in Christ.

6. **The Day of Atonement:** (Leviticus 23—32) A remembrance of God’s righteousness that demands a sacrifice and the ultimate work of atonement completed in Christ.
7. **The Feast of Tabernacles:** (Leviticus 33—44) A celebration of God’s blessing to all who remember their wanderings and seek to obey Him.

The biblical models inform how the community intentionally stops in order to gather together to remember specific things God has done—both at home and in their communal times together—and joyfully worship Him because of who He has been, is, and will be. During these times, we will tell and proclaim how we have seen God at work in our lives and offer joyful worship in celebration.

We believe that God ordained this kind of rhythm because active remembrance cultivates relationship; God wants us to look back and recognize His faithfulness, intense love, and personal interaction with His people individually and as a community. When we pause to remember, we honor our relationship with God—that intimate relationship in which we speak and He listens, He speaks and we respond. And our response is celebration!

> VII. IMPLEMENTATION INTO PROGRAMMING

CHURCH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

As church staff and volunteers begin to feel compelled to implement these philosophical changes, a variety of questions arise:

- In what ways will we need to structure our weekends to accommodate creating space for our children/students to experience God and His Word?
- How will we communicate these goals to our parents and children/students?
- What language differences will we embrace?
- How will this affect the overall annual calendar?
- Are there any events, practices, curriculum, or structures that *violate* these principles? If so, what are they and how will we go about revising or eliminating them?
- Are there any events, practices, curriculum, or structures *missing* that support these principles? If so, how can we obtain them or integrate them into our existing paradigm?
- What are we *willing* to give up or sacrifice in order to make this a reality?
- What are we *unwilling* to give up or sacrifice?
- In what ways have we been unintentionally blinded by tradition, existing practices, or curriculum that we need to abandon immediately?
- How can we ensure that we are not merely “adding on” spiritual formation and family ministry, but that we are fundamentally adopting a new approach to thinking and being?
- How will we be inspirational in our approach?
- How can we cast a compelling vision to those we are leading?
- How will we serve as role models, specifically to those who are unsure or unaware of a new approach?

- What is one thing I can do today that will allow me to be better equipped to lead this charge?
- How will I engage my Senior Pastor with this process? How can I inspire him with the new direction that I feel that God is leading us? What resources will I need to help me do this?

PARENTS

Parents play a vital role in the spiritual formation process, both being spiritually responsible before God and also partnering with the church. Questions to consider in regards to parents include:

- How will parents need to be inspired by this philosophical direction? Who is responsible for this inspiration and how will it be unveiled and executed?
- How will parents need to be equipped? What kinds of events, information, and opportunities will be available to ensure that every parent understands the philosophy and has the opportunity to be empowered to implement it in their home?
- What kind of resources will be needed to equip/support our parents? Finances? Time? Staff? Outside speakers/resources? Curriculum? Web site?
- What will we specifically expect from our parents?
- How often will we offer practical opportunities for parent education and support?
- How will we communicate with our parents on a regular basis and give them updates?
- How will parents offer feedback to us?

CHILDREN/STUDENTS

Questions to consider in regards to children/students include:

- How will we inspire and communicate a new path of spiritual formation to our children/students?
- In what ways will we adapt our language in order to make sure that all grades participate and understand the path before them?
- What are the desired outcomes of our children/student communities in this paradigm?
- In what way will we solicit feedback from them, if any?
- How will we discern the diverse, but complimentary, roles of church and home in this model? Who will be responsible for articulating each role in the life of a child/student?
- What types of children/student involvement will we encourage in this process? How will they be able to shape this formation process for themselves ... especially in middle school/high school?
- How will student rewards and discipline be evaluated from a spiritual formational approach?



VIII. MINISTRY APPROACH— INSPIRE. EQUIP. SUPPORT.

INSPIRE:

I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will *inspire* them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. (Jeremiah 32:40, emphasis added)

We have the great privilege of sharing our enthusiasm for how God is moving in this new generation and the future impact that will be theirs to make on this world! Through storytelling we share the vision God has put in our hearts to bring transformation through spiritual formation and family ministry in the local church. Before lasting change can occur, whether structurally or personally, one must see an *envisioned future* that is compelling and attainable.

We desire to inspire others with the hope of seeing families and students who:

- Worship from the inside out compelled by the Spirit, not through expected or mandated behavior. They see worship as a lifestyle, not a moment or event.
- Embrace a kingdom-community mindset and choose to usher in the realities of justice, mercy, love, the presence of God, forgiveness, service, and humility to life in everyday situations.
- Possess a global worldview and feel responsible for their brothers and sisters around the world. They feel compelled to make Christ known to every corner of the globe within their lifetime.
- Are knowledgeable about God's Word, but more importantly, through it they have come to know God personally. They have investigated the Scriptures for themselves and have concluded that God's Word is Truth and are unashamed of it.
- Know God's voice, desire to obey it, and then obey it in and through the power of the Holy Spirit as they depend on Him alone for strength.

EQUIP:

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to *equip* God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11–13 NLT, emphasis added)

Inspiration is only as great as the ability to come alongside and equip those who have been impacted by it toward the desired and agreed upon goal. As we champion our envisioned future and God brings us His workers, we must dedicate ourselves to the equipping of the saints as prescribed in Ephesians 4. The role of the church is to be an equipping and sending agent for the sake of the gospel. As we give ourselves to the task of equipping, *we replicate ourselves in others*. At its very



core, this is discipleship. The one who equips is constantly assessing what the individual needs in order to successfully carry out the envisioned future.

Included in this area of ministry are: resourcing, training, modeling, giving opportunities, offering suggestions, sharing context, and granting access to information and instruction.

SUPPORT:

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every *supporting* ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as *each part does its work*. (Ephesians 4:16, emphasis added)

The ministry of support is the opportunity to “come alongside” another. This ministry allows those involved in the dream to be realigned over and over again to the primary vision. This often means re-casting the vision and telling the progress in the journey. Support says that *no one person will ever journey alone*. We believe that the envisioned future will be arrived upon as a collaborative effort between the body of Christ, the giftings within, and the power of God’s Spirit.

The role of the Spirit is primary here as we look to Him for wisdom, comfort, and guidance. As we seek Him and His plans, we are reminded that this is *His* plan and that He alone placed it on our hearts for *His* glory.

Included in this area of ministry are: encouragement, prayer, personal spiritual transformation, feedback, God’s Word, clarity on what is needed at each stage, and personal reflection and assessment.