

‘Stepping Forward in Family Discipleship Ministry’

A. Our Opportune Moment

With the shift of the nature of church ministry from being dependant on onsite corporate gatherings to ministry at and through the homes of the church members during this pandemic period, the state of these homes has inevitably become very critical in determining the kind of church life that we could have.

The number and intensity of family stressors have increased greatly during this period, adding much to the struggles of the family and, thus, their capacity to function ministerially. Many of our families are in great distress at present and will remain so in the foreseeable future.

There has not been a more needful moment in the recent memory for the church to minister to the families. What we have on hand is a great ministry opportunity.

We believe this is a Kairos moment for the church to respond to its call (Ephesians 4:12) to pursue the mission to disciple the family (family discipleship) for the following vision.

Each family an active evangelism and discipleship ministry centre of the church body, shaping the hearts of its members with a love for God and others with the believing parents as the primary faith-trainers of their children.

B. Strategic Response

We believe our response to this moment should aim for the following two goals.

1. **Short-term.** Meeting a priority (urgent) family felt-need.
2. **Long-term.** Launching the family discipleship culture-building process.

1. Short-term Focus: Family Need Programme

Introduction of this programme (hereinafter referred to as FNP), meeting the specific existing need (s) of the families and the church, is strategic for the following reasons.

- a. Meeting the felt-needs of the church body and allowing it to experience the quick impacts of such a programme.
- b. Allowing the leadership, congregation, and the families the opportunities to experience the nature of the family discipleship process (explained

further below). If successful, felt-impacts would act as a catalyst to the church committing to enlarging this process further.

It is important to note that primary purpose of conducting the FNP is not just to meet certain needs but as a tool to facilitate the development of the family discipleship process in the church.

We shall explain in the following section how we could identify and select the right programme for the local church and implement it as a part of such development.

2. Long-term Focus: Building Family Discipleship Culture

Our overall focus is on building the appropriate church culture that facilitates the establishment of family discipleship in the long run.

For this to happen, we need a process that leads the church from where we are to where we want to go (firmly establishing the family discipleship culture).

The first part of that culture-building process involves making major churchwide shifts in the beliefs and values concerning family discipleship.

Once these are properly established, they would drive the nature of family discipleship expressions/practices (training of ministry personnel, conduct of programmes, resource allocation, etc.) a local church would develop for its congregation.

There are three phases in building the target culture in the local church.

- a. **PREPARING** for culture shifts in the church (leadership and congregation) and in the individual homes.
- b. **MAKING** the actual culture shifts.
- c. **ESTABLISHING** the new family and church cultures.

a. Preparing for Culture Shifts

The overall focus in this foundation-building phase of the whole process of developing the family discipleship culture in the church is to create a suitable climate for change in the church.

It consists of two parts.

- a) Organising a leadership team.
- b) Developing a strategic plan.

Building the Leadership Team

We need a strong team that is committed to lead the church through the long journey (over 3 to 5 years) of establishing the strong family discipleship culture.

Depending on the organisation structure of the church, the team members could include representatives from the top church leadership

team and various church ministries besides those with specific skill sets needed for it to function.

Strategic Planning

We outline below examples of strategies and plans one may consider in building the family discipleship culture in the church.

Strategies	Plans
1. To secure strong commitment of the stakeholders in building the family discipleship culture in the church	Goal 1: To establish understanding and conviction of beliefs and values of family discipleship. Plans: ▪ To advocate these beliefs and values to the top leadership team (senior pastor, elders, etc.) and secure their strong approval and commitment to them. ▪ They, in turn, advocate to the rest of the church leaders and the congregation.
	Goal 2: To give right priority to family discipleship in the corporate church. Plans: ▪ To incorporate the family discipleship emphasis into the mission, vision and core value statements of the church. ▪ To make family discipleship a key factor to consider in the church performance assessment framework.
2. To raise the alarm	Goal: To create a sense of urgency for building the new culture. Plans: ▪ To present relevant statistics on the conditions of the families and their impacts on the church. ▪ To conduct the family needs survey under the DO Home Churchwide Conversations Initiative at https://globalfamilychallenge.com/ and present the findings to the stakeholders.
3. To establish effective leadership team	Goal: To involve the members of the leadership team in building their homes. Plans: ▪ To disciple them with the selected FNP. ▪ If needed, to identify other family needs of these leaders. ▪ To design and implement appropriate family discipleship programmes to meet these needs.
4. To formulate the vision, mission, and core values of family discipleship	Goal: To prepare statements of these. Plans: ▪ The family discipleship leadership team prepares the draft statements. ▪ They then secure the approval of the church leadership.
5. To introduce the selected family needs programme	Goal 1: To identify and select the programme. Plans: ▪ Identifying the priority family need(s) we are seeking to meet.

Strategies	Plans
	▪ Selecting a family discipleship programme that meets the identified need(s).
	Goal 2: To conduct the discipleship process. Plans: ▪ To design and plan for the process. ▪ To implement and monitor the progress of the programme.

b. Making The shifts

The main focus here is to engage and empower all the stakeholders in bringing about the culture shifts.

There are three steps to take in this part of the process.

- To communicate for buy-in.** The main focus is to rally all stakeholders to join in implementing the plan.
- To empower for action.** This usually includes training and releasing personnel for implementing the action plans.
- To generate short-term wins.** A time to celebrate the conclusion of a programme that runs for a short period of time is an effective way to building confidence of the stakeholders and allowing them the opportunity to have the first taste of the benefits of family discipleship promptly.

c. Establishing the Shifts

The third and last part of the church culture change process that we will involve in in cultivating the family discipleship ministry in the local church is to establish the culture firmly and permanently in it.

Here, we refer to the long-term aspect of the process. The main focus in this part of the process is to ensure that the family discipleship culture in the church continues to grow over time.