

Truth:78

How Churches Can Partner with Parents

We believe that God has called both the church and home to raise up the next generations to know, honor, and treasure God through Jesus Christ. This is accomplished through a strategic, loving partnership between the church and home. This partnership affirms the role and responsibility of church leadership to provide encouragement and training for parents, and also to provide formal instruction for children and youth. This partnership affirms that parents by proximity, opportunity, and God's design, bear a unique responsibility for nurturing their children's faith. Our resources and ministry philosophy are designed to foster this partnership.

Following are six practical ways the church can foster this partnership:

1. Clarify Roles and Expectations

The above paragraph assumes that there are clear, distinct, roles for both church and home and that both are working together to pursue one main goal for our children. However, for that partnership to happen, these roles need to be clarified and expectations need to be articulated. The church could, for example, tell parents to expect the following:

The church will...

- **provide** a safe, welcoming, structured, age-appropriate environment for the students.
- **instruct** children with well-prepared, theologically sound, faith-nurturing Bible lessons that are presented in an age-appropriate, interesting, and God-honoring manner.
- **design** a class structure that is attentive to the needs of the children while emphasizing and maximizing spiritual instruction.
- **provide** parents with written communication outlining class procedures and expectations, behavioral guidelines, contact information, curriculum notes, and other relevant information.
- **extend** to parents an open invitation to sit in and observe the classroom.
- **recognize and affirm** that parents bear the primary responsibility for nurturing their child's faith. Teachers and other leaders will not seek to usurp that role.
- **speak** directly to the parents when an issue arises with their child and seek solutions that properly weigh the needs of the larger class and the specific child.

2. Encourage Parents to Include their Children to Participate in the Corporate Worship Experience

Too often children are excluded from the most central, most regular, most valuable, and most corporate activity of the church: the weekly worship service. When families are encouraged to worship together, we communicate to the children that they are a part of the congregation and, as such, should be included when the church gathers to worship. The presence of children also serves as a reminder to the church of its responsibility to nurture the faith of the next generation. But many parents feel overwhelmed by this prospect. The church leadership can help parents and congregants overcome any barriers by articulating the biblical rationale for including children in the service and then providing practical resources for parents. Truth78 has developed two resources for this purpose.

Children in the Worship Service

(<http://www.childrendesiringgod.org/resources/resource.php?id=53&productPageId=2>)

In this booklet, David and Sally Michael address challenges of having children in the service and provide practical suggestions for parents and churches, in the context of a biblical vision for the active participation of children in the worship services of the church.

My Church Notebook: Come into His Presence

(<http://www.childrendesiringgod.org/resources/resource.php?id=42&productPageId=6>)

Guides elementary aged children to participate in the church service and apply what they have heard at home. The notebook includes prompts and questions to answer as well as space for further notes or drawings.

3. Connect Parents to the Classroom Experience

A very tangible and practical way for the church to partner with parents is to encourage parents to become more acquainted with and involved in their child's classroom experience. Here are a few ideas for doing this:

- Host a Parent Orientation and Open House at the beginning of each Sunday school year where students and their parents hear an overview of the curriculum and class structure, as well as meet the teachers and volunteers.
- Send out a monthly class newsletter to every home, highlighting what the students have been learning, special announcements, prayer requests, and one or more memorable moments from the class.
- Encourage parents to sign up to bring, and help serve, a treat.
- Host a Sunday lunch for the families of your class.
- Give a personal invitation for parents to visit the classroom.

4. Introduce Parents to Vision Casting Resources

Another important way for the church to partner with parents is to share the church's vision for family, youth, and children's discipleship. Too often—albeit unintentionally—parents are not informed of the bigger picture regarding children's and youth ministry. Truth78 has a variety of video and print resources that communicate the vision, mission, and values that undergird our ministry and all of our products. Here are some suggestions to share with parents:

- **Vision videos** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDSTy5-iMxU>) Pastor David Michael and Sally Michael explain the foundations and key components of vision-oriented ministry in these newly recorded, 15-minute videos.
- **Truth:78 View book** (https://issuu.com/truth78org/docs/vision_booklet_-_final) This booklet explains the importance of vision-oriented ministry as well as six key components for its implementation. It also presents Truth78's curricula scope and sequence and an overview of other available resources for both church and home.
- **Indestructible Joy for the Next Generations** (bit.ly/indestructiblejoy) Presents a vision of indestructible joy for the next generations—a joy that can withstand the temptations, the trials, and the persecutions of the world. Each chapter is drawn from messages given over the past 15 years at the national conferences.

5. Provide Parents Truth:78 Curricula GIFT Pages

Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) pages strategically foster a partnership between church and home. After children have received formal weekly instruction in the classroom, take-home GIFT pages provide parents with a tool that will assist them in taking the biblical truths learned and guiding their children to personal application. Parents have the greatest opportunity for “teachable moments,” situations that arise in everyday life, that can be opportunities to apply the truth of God. Real heart application of biblical truth, which changes lives, usually takes place in the context of relationship and everyday life.

GIFT pages provide parents with the following:

- Lesson title, main ideas, selected memory verse, and a list of Scripture presented in the lesson.
- A brief summary of the lesson.
- As You Walk by the Way—questions to further spiritual discussion and heart application.
- Action Steps—suggestions for acting on biblical truth.

We strongly encourage children’s ministry leaders and Sunday school volunteers to make these pages easily available to parents. Furthermore, it is important to educate parents regarding the importance of these pages and seek ways to motivate and assist them if necessary.

6. Recommend Discipleship Resources for the Home

There are many excellent resources on the market for parents to help disciple their children—and there are also many poor resources. The church can serve parents by recommending and making available excellent resources. For example,

- Truth78 devotional books and parenting booklets available at bit.ly/Truth78Books and bit.ly/truth78booklets.
- Truth78 recommended parenting books
 - *The Disciple-Making Parent—A Comprehensive Guidebook for Raising Your Children to Love and Follow Jesus Christ*, by Chap Bettis
 - *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting*, by William P. Farley
 - *Teach Them Diligently: How to Use the Scriptures in Child Training*, by Louis Paul Priolo
 - *The Faith of a Child_A Step-by-Step Guide to Salvation for Your Child*, by Art Murphy
 - *Your Child’s Profession of Faith*, by Dennis Gundersen
 - *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, by Tedd Tripp
 - *Instructing a Child’s Heart*, by Tedd Tripp and Margy Tripp
 - *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, by Paul David Tripp
 - *Future Men*, by Douglas Wilson