

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

RECLAIMING THE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP ROLE OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN
FAMILY LIFE: COACHING AND MARKERS

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ABSTRACT

RECLAIMING THE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN FAMILY LIFE: COACHING AND MARKERS

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Christians in the Western culture often struggle to pass on their faith to the next generation and as a result, the way God designed the family to function is being unwittingly abandoned. Countless parents today are leaving genuine faith and reliance on God behind. Though God's Word gives specific instructions on how to maintain and pass on faith, many have abdicated this injunction. In an effort to encourage authentic faith within the family, the local church can come alongside parents to help them understand and share their faith by offering training and coaching to embrace their own faith and pass it on to their children. This project is designed as a model to teach and celebrate spiritual mile markers, coupled with coaching for parents so they may reclaim their place as spiritual leaders within their families and guide their children in the legacy of Christian faith.

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Contents

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Statement of the Problem.....	6
The Statement of Limitations.....	9
Theoretical Basis.....	10
The Statement of Methodology.....	18
Subsequent Chapter Overviews.....	19
The Review of Literature.....	24
CHAPTER TWO: PROBLEMS FACING TODAY’S FAMILY.....	43
CHAPTER THREE: FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGY.....	55
CHAPTER FOUR: MILE MARKERS.....	62
CHAPTER FIVE: THE DESIGN AND PROCESS OF PARENT COACHING.....	71
Unit 1: Key Concepts of Coaching.....	77
Unit 2: Communication.....	81
Unit 3: Roles and Responsibilities and Understanding the Effects of Heritage.....	86
Unit 4: Personality, Love Languages, Ages and Stages/Passages, Mile Markers.....	91
Unit 5: Giving the Blessing and Dedication.....	97

Reflection and Implementation.....	99
CHAPTER SIX: INITIAL RESULTS, CONCERNS, AND CONCLUSION.....	101
APPENDIX A Spiritual Leadership in the Family Survey.....	113
APPENDIX B Invitation to Coaching Ministry	117
APPENDIX C Parent Coaching Interest Form.....	118
APPENDIX D Coaches Invitation.....	119
APPENDIX E Rolling Hills Ministry Mile Markers.....	121
APPENDIX F Parent Coach Training Notes	127
APPENDIX G Parent Coaching Information and Testimonies.....	159
APPENDIX H Copyright Permission.....	161
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	161
VITA.....	171

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: DISC personality groups 92

Figure 2. Discover Family Operating Style with Circumplex Model..... 132

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NIV	New International Version of the Holy Bible
RHCC	Rolling Hills Community Church

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Church is being challenged to respond to a world that seems to be taking a downward spiral morally, socially, and economically while technological and scientific developments continue to soar. In the midst of this, families are taking a serious hit and many are struggling to remain healthy and intact. How can this be? Surely, these advances should change the world for the better, but somehow it is only a veneer and does not. One reason for the challenge to the family, as understood by the Christian, is that apart from God we can do nothing truly good or of eternal significance. In John 15:5, Jesus made this clear when He said, “I am the vine and you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”¹ Sadly, though God clearly reveals Himself through creation (both in nature and humankind), people created in the image of God with an innate sense of morality, often choose to ignore Him and pursue their own ways. There are several references to being made in God’s image throughout scripture beginning with Genesis 1:27-8:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”²

Theologians have differing views on what exactly it means to be made in God’s image, but clearly it tied to several things; relationship, sexuality (i.e. male and female) and ruling over the rest of creation. To be made in His image is to look like God. This understanding speaks to God’s creativity, dominion, loving character and the way in which mankind is to reflect Him.

¹ *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984. Jn. 15:5. All Scripture quoted in this project are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

² Gen.1:27-8.

Being made in His image is clarified further in the New Testament where people are admonished to become like Jesus Christ by accepting the atonement He provided through His sinless life and death and the hope of life eternal through His resurrection.³ Christians are called to glorify God by showing love for Him and others above themselves.⁴ The Christian life, as seen in Jesus, is characterized by self-sacrifice and putting others before themselves. It is marked by integrity, perseverance, hope and love.⁵ This stands in stark contrast to the 'way of the world' that is often self-focused and striving. A look at current trends and recently gathered statistics reveals this struggle.

As the world changes and new stresses are felt, the church needs to be able to minister to hurting families and share the truth of life with hope for the future, yet currently Christians are often missing the mark. Stable families lead to stable communities who are more able to be flexible and respond to societal needs. It is significant to note that people of faith tend to exhibit greater marital stability⁶. Thus it follows that even from a purely societal concern, faith development and commitment should be encouraged. Further, those who profess faith in Jesus have an even greater motivation to share the truth, yet they err on the side of tolerance and not wanting to impose their will on their children or others. This sets young people up to never truly embrace the faith and then later walk away from the church. Helping families engage in the Christian lifestyle is foundational.

³ Rom. 5:8.

⁴ Mat. 22:37-39.

⁵ 1 Thes. 1:3.

⁶ Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. "Why Religion Matters Even More: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability." The Heritage Foundation - Leadership For America. December 18, 2006, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/12/why-religion-matters-even-more-the-impact-of-religious-practice-on-social-stability> (accessed March 12, 2013).

There is a critical window of opportunity while children are living at home to minister to and teach them the faith. It should be noted that “Nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13 (43%), and two out of three born again Christians (64%) made that commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday.”⁷ Clearly, the years at home are very significant in becoming a Christian. This follows the biblical directive in Proverbs 22:6 to “train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”⁸ Since the data show that most of a child’s foundations including behavioral habits, core values, and primary spiritual beliefs are established by the age of thirteen,⁹ believers need to be diligent at home and church to instill the truth of God’s Word in the hearts of children and do it in such a way that they engage with Jesus. David Kinnaman, the Strategic Leader of The Barna Group stated “...we have learned that effective youth ministries do not operate in isolation but have a significant role in training parents to minister to their own children.”¹⁰ The church must be proactive in seeking to support and minister to parents so that they may pass on the legacy of faith within their families, thus strengthening both the church and society.

The way in which modern technology has shifted communication often promotes exposure to sexuality and other previously taboo areas that have softened traditional morals and has indeed affected the face of the contemporary western world culture. For the church to

⁷ Barna Group. "Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids." *BarnaGroup.org*. October 11, 2004. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids> (accessed February 8, 2013).

⁸ Prov. 22:6

⁹ George Barna. *Futurecast - What Today's Trends Mean for Tomorrow's World*. (Austin: BarnaBooks, 2011). 50.

¹⁰ Barna Group, Inc. “Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritual Active Teen Years.” Barna Group. September 11, 2006. <http://www..barna.org/barna-updated/article/16-teensnext-gen/147-most-twentysoemthings-put-on-the-shelf-folling-spiritually-active-tee-years> (accessed February 8, 2013).

comprehend this aspect of the modern family necessitates that it recognize that this ready access to more banal behavior changes the way one values purity and “[w]hen human sexuality is distorted through neglect or abuse, the human family suffers as the image-bearers of God.”¹¹ It can be challenging to remain a distinct people and yet function in society. The church, as the extended family of God, needs to help individual families to recognize God’s path for their families and walk in it. Others will note their integrity and loving behavior as they show God to each other and the world.

Beyond this ready exposure to worldliness, people no longer need to wait or anticipate much desired communication and information. Qualitatively, this changes the way things are done. This information literally is at one’s fingertips and while can be such a blessing, it may also have a downside. The value and commitment that comes from putting forth effort to learn, discover, and communicate can be compromised. Further, it seems that many families no longer require effort (and time) to be expended by the children to earn the things they want. Certainly the instantaneous expectations for information and entertainment exacerbate the situation. Another aspect of this concern may be due, in part, to the large number of two-income household where both parents are working because want to be able to provide “the good life” for themselves and their children. Not only do families trust people outside their unit to cover many of their child rearing responsibilities, but mutual esteem in these relationships seems to be diminishing. People may be viewed as service vendors rather than significant contributors to the lives of those they interact with. Parents often simple miss out on the time with their children. This kind of provision and instant gratification seems to be linked to a sense of entitlement and a

¹¹ K. A. Mathews. “Genesis 1-11:26.” in vol. 1A. *The New American Commentary*. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996) 174.

lack of respect is often the consequence. Child and Behavioral Therapist, James Lehman, shares,

[i]t's important to keep in mind that parents and kids get some powerful messages in our society. One of the most prevalent is, "The more you give your child, the better parent you are." Children are also led to believe they're entitled to receive. Commercials, TV shows, movies, and their friends at school all tell kids, "This is the new thing. This is what everybody's getting. If you don't have it, you won't be cool." So it's easy for you as a parent to feel obligated to give to your child—and pretty soon, your child will grow to expect it.¹²

James Lehman states,

as a parent, it's important that you teach your child the value of hard work and earning things. He needs to really see that integral connection between making an effort and achieving success. Conversely, when things are handed to your child, the message he's getting is, "You don't need to do anything—everything will be given to you in life just because you're you."¹³

While surely parents do not intend this to be the message they often yield to societal norms hoping their children will feel special and happy. The entitlement mentality that ensues can make it then become very difficult for the new young adults to function properly in society or the church. Many may neither think they need to work for they want or need, nor honor those who expect it from them.

As a Christian family, this of lack of commitment or sense of entitlement may also make it difficult for the child to understand that he must own his faith. He or she is not truly a believer just because his or her family goes to church. A child may experience a crisis of faith when off on his own, choosing to believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ or not. It is this life changing belief that ensures a legacy of faith. Alternatively, a child may not question faith, never really embracing it or walking away, not realizing what is at stake. The church must respond to these

¹²James Lehman, MSW. "“I Want It Now!” How to Challenge a False Sense of Entitlement in Kids." Empowering Parents Legacy Publishing Company, <http://www.empoweringparents.com/I-Want-It-Now-How-to-Challenge-a-False-Sense-of-Entitlement-in-Kids.php#> (accessed December 18, 2013).

¹³ Ibid.

elements of society in a way that helps parents raise their children to know, love and follow Jesus.

The Statement of the Problem

The church needs to develop a new paradigm to strengthen families as the primary mode of faith education. This new paradigm should offer educational programs at the various ages and stages, counseling for crises within the church, fellowship, service, and corporate worship. In addition to these basics, a dynamic intergenerational discipleship with intentional markers or mile stones that delineate development of Christian spirituality within the family is needed. In this way the legacy of faith is ensured and bears much fruit. It requires a cohesive family-focused emphasis.

This approach does not negate the essential value of the aforementioned aspects of church family life, but focuses attention less on traditional training programs and more on experiential sharing of faith from within the body of believers. This kind of sharing would be focus on developing relationships in which faith in Jesus is evident and clearly integral as they travel life together. The goal is a more dynamic synergy within the church, as families, minister to each other directly through sharing their testimony, wisdom, experience, prayer and support. This kind of discipleship is not new, but has taken a backseat as church structure and programming has developed. It is noteworthy that this is the very method Jesus used to train his disciples. They walked life together. The contemporary church should likewise follow His example. A life of faith will be shallow if it only encompasses once or twice a week gathering and is not actively pursued and expressed in the everyday.

In order to walk life together as a church in this age some key elements of life and spiritual development that were common in Jesus' day need to be embraced. This ministry concept aims at doing this by: 1) identifying and celebrating natural spiritual development goals as expressed through RHCC spiritual mile markers and 2) implementing relational discipleship with parents to support young families in their faith development through the RHCC Parent Coaching lay ministry. In the time in which Jesus lived there were regularly celebrated spiritual markers such as Passover (celebrating God's protection and deliverance) and times when blessing were formally practiced. Likewise there was a strong sense of faith community and extended family support. History and Old Testament writings show that remaining true to God was the constant struggle for the people of Israel. As they fell away, God gave them the opportunity to repent and return to Him, as a people set apart. They traced their lineage to their patriarchal fathers, who received God's blessing through a covenant, and understood the importance associated with being children of God and His chosen people. Jesus was of the line of David through his mother and his earthly step-father thus fulfilling one of many prophecies about being the Messiah and Savior. When Jesus was baptized, He received the blessing of His heavenly Father "And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased.""¹⁴ These are some of the important constructs that can to be incorporated into today's Christian family.

This concept is not designed to become another isolated church program, but centrally integrated into the life of the church and other ministry areas. The paradigm involves specifically embracing an understanding of the God-given privilege and responsibility for family faith

¹⁴ Matt.3:17.

development and celebrating mile markers, as well as helping the more mature members of the body come alongside those who are just beginning the journey of faith and legacy training.

This strategy implies that Christian parents have the primary opportunity and responsibility to teach their children about their faith and lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The church, as a local community of faith, including these parents and children, is to deliberately seek to support parents in their mission. The church needs to intentionally partner with families to equip parents to do that which they are called to do as people of faith and not just hope that regular church programming will be enough to lead our young people to personal relationship with their God. As noted earlier, if young people do not grasp their faith before getting out on their own they are far less likely to become true followers of Jesus. Parents need to understand and take positive action in this most important area of life. In his research on raising kids to become spiritual champions George Barna identifies some key characteristics of successful parenting. He calls these parents “Revolutionary Parents” and says that they “earnestly accept the role of being the primary and dominant spiritual mentor of their children. Most acknowledge the importance of being active in a healthy community of faith, but they also define the community’s role as one of supplementing what the parents are doing.”¹⁵ The church family can support them in their efforts.

As this thesis project explores and addresses this problem, the term church will be used generically to mean the family of all believers and followers (disciples) of Jesus. Congregation will be used to describe a local body of believers and family as a married couple with or without children or any home with at least one parent and child. Legacy will be understood to be that of value that is passed on to the next generation. Mile Markers are key points of natural

¹⁵ George Barna. *Revolutionary Parenting: Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna an imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2007), 75-6.

development that have been preceded by instruction and celebrated as a spiritual milestone in the life of a child.

Specifically, this new paradigm and strategy will be introduced, implemented, and refined over an extended time at Rolling Hills Community Church in Franklin, Tennessee. This is a dynamic young church community both in the chronological age of the membership and establishment of the community of faith. They are seeking authenticity and truth as they learn to live out their belief in Jesus. The largest demographic within the community is preschoolers and hence Rolling Hills Community Church – (RHCC) has a preponderance of young families. There is great need to reach these families with the Gospel and to support their growth as committed followers of Jesus Christ. The goal is to raise a generation which is devoted to God, disciplined at home and fully supported by their church to be a light to their world. The focus will be on enabling parents to be the spiritual leaders of their families.

The Statement of Limitations

Developing this strategy within this community of faith will have implications in every area of ministry, but the focus will center in family ministry areas. Areas such as Community Groups, Worship Leadership, Church Interns, and Missions will not be specifically addressed. Other areas such as Student Ministry, Women’s Ministry and Men’s Ministry will only be addressed to the extent that specific family-focused activities and mile markers interface with them. The leaders of these ministries will be included in all discussions and planning that impacts them as an attempt is made to integrate this family focus into the life of the church. Similarly, discipleship ministries already established by the church, such as mentoring programs for marriage, women and men, college and youth, as well as a program for mothers called “Mom to Mom”, will not be directly be included in this project. These groups and the essential ministry

they perform, while sometimes touching on family life issues, are also outside the parameters of this project.

This project offers a proactive strategy of parent coaching and mile marker goal setting and celebration. Therefore ministries of the church that involve counseling, such as Celebrate Recovery, will not be a part of the scope of this project. Young Adult and the senior “Second Wind” ministries, while very important to the life of the church, will likewise not be included in this project. Rolling Hills Community Church also operates an independent preschool which will not directly interface with this project, though the hope is that the positive effect on family life will reverberate throughout the church community and the community at large.

Theoretical Basis

Often Christians in our culture struggle to pass the faith on to the next generation. Though there are many wonderful things about the current times, never-the-less, they can be difficult and families are becoming very disjointed. The family unit, which used to live, work, play and worship together, is now disintegrating. Divorce runs rampant, alternative lifestyles are being embraced, and the way God designed the family to function is being unwittingly abandoned. This puts God’s people in a precarious position that needs to be addressed so that we may pass the legacy of faith.

Direction for passing this legacy is specifically given in the Bible and a review of some of the key scriptures in the Old Testament, Gospels and Epistles will give a solid foundation for understanding the importance and manner in which faith can be passed from generation to generation. In the Old Testament, readers learn how God chose to carve out a people for Himself in which He would bring healing and redemption, allowing them to once again know Him and walk with Him as man did at the dawn of creation. He chose a faithful man and his wife and

promised them a family that someday would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. These would be God's people. Generations passed, and indeed this family grew into a great nation. They had their ups and downs as God faithfully revealed himself to them. Finally, after delivering them from oppression, He led them to the land He had promised them to dwell.

At this point in history, their leader Moses recounts God's faithfulness and charges the people, the clans and groups of families, to remember and seek God always. God told Moses that he would not be able to enter the Promised Land himself, but that he should prepare the people. Moses not only endorses his successor for leadership, but gives specific instructions to all parents and families on how to maintain and pass the legacy of faith. His carefully chosen last words are known as the Shema, which means to hear or listen carefully. These loving guidelines are recorded in Deuteronomy 6: 4-8:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.¹⁶

The church needs to reclaim this spiritual directive. This core Old Testament creed was endorsed by Jesus when He answered the question about what was the most important law and, said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."¹⁷ Jesus himself fulfilled the old covenant law, being the ultimate sacrifice, giving believers a new covenant that they may draw near to God by believing in Him. In this statement Jesus "proclaims that we must reinterpret the meaning of the law in light of His coming and in light of the

¹⁶ Deut.6:4-9.

¹⁷ Matt.22:37-40.

profound changes that the new covenant has brought.”¹⁸ In the Apostle Paul’s second letter to Timothy he includes this concept as he reminds the reader that “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”¹⁹ Ouachita Baptist University Christian Studies professors J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays clarify this understanding in their textbook on Preaching God’s Word saying, “... the Old Testament legal material contains rich principles and lessons for living that are still relevant when interpreted through New Testament teaching.”²⁰ Though the Shema is clearly in line with leading a Godly life as defined by Jesus and the New Testament writers, many have relinquished this instruction, perhaps because our society encourages tolerance, individuality and options from a plethora of world views. Hurt people and broken families find it difficult to maintain their role in passing the faith and may lose sight of the importance of this role in their families. Some try to parent alone, while others try to blend with another. Being a distinct people, a royal priesthood, is no longer seen as a primary objective for contemporary people of God. Christians try, often on their own, to survive. God’s Word encourages us to bear one another up and help each other, individually and as a body, to live a life that glorifies Him.

God calls Christians, as His people, to share Him with those around us, beginning with their families. This should infuse every part of the conversation and the day. Parents are to use the naturally shared moments of each day to talk about God’s faithfulness and love. They are to do this first thing in the morning (as they get up), while spending time together at home eating

¹⁸ J. S., Duvall and J. D. Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 363.

¹⁹ 2 Tim. 3:16.

²⁰ J. S., Duvall and J. D. Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 363.

and enjoying each other's company (when sitting at home), while in the car (travel time, along the road), and as they close the day and go to bed (when they lie down). It needs to be a normal part of everyday talk and become a part of their identity. Then their children will see, hear and know about who God is. It is the parent's responsibility and call by God to teach their children of Him. Parents need to specifically learn to recognize and interact with God, sharing Him with their children throughout the day, every day, utilizing teachable moments. This concept will be central to this work and passing the legacy of faith. It is the God-given plan for spiritual formation. Deuteronomy 7:9 affirms this as it states: "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands."²¹ It is vitally important to teach children to keep His commands so that God will bless the generations that follow us with His love.

The psalmist in Psalm 78: 1-8, reminds listener/readers of the importance of remembering what God has done so that they can remain faithful from generation to generation and not make the same mistakes as their ancestors.

O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth 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 their 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. 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.²²

²¹ Deut. 7: 9.

²² Ps. 78:1-8.

This scripture closes with a warning and reminder about those who did not stay true to God.

Believers are admonished to know and keep His commands and trust Him. Parents need to take heed to these words today.

The wisdom of Proverbs states, “The Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in”²³, the reminder is given that parents need to lovingly discipline their children. This is part of the training that must take place to become responsible people. Much can be learned from mistakes and loving redirection.

The New Testament is rich in useful counsel for the spiritual development of families as well. In the gospels, there are many records of Jesus’ words about sharing the faith. One of the most famous is known as the Great Commission,

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”²⁴

Jesus commanded followers to make disciples and baptize them. He will be with believers and they are honored to share and affirm the faith as they pass it on to their children. In Mark 10:13-16 the story of Jesus’ concern for children is given:

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.²⁵

²³ Prov. 3:12.

²⁴ Matt. 28:18-20.

²⁵ Mark 10:13-16.

Christians need to follow this example blessing their children, publicly acknowledging the simple faith that they exhibit, and encouraging them to grow according to Jesus' teaching. Dedication to the Lord likewise should be celebrated much like Jesus' parents did for him when he was a small child. This is recorded in Gospels: "When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him [Jesus] to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord."²⁶ This is the basis for Family Dedication; which is the first of the Mile Markers Rolling Hills Community Church has identified and celebrates.

Another spiritual mile marker is baptism. Christians learn that "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'"²⁷

Jesus was baptized by John in accordance with scripture for the forgiveness of sins [of the world] and received the blessing of His Heavenly Father and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is true for believers today, as they are baptized in His name. Christians can celebrate this commitment of faith and, as parents and the church family, give a blessing to their children in this most significant mile marker.

Paul's letters, which comprise most of the New Testament, have much to say about family relationships and how believers should live. Central to the understanding of the church's role in family ministry is Paul's instruction to Titus, the Pastor of the new church communities they established together in Crete. In chapter 2:1-8 he said:

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be

²⁶ Luke 2: 22.

²⁷ Luke 3: 21-23.

slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.²⁸

This scripture points to the essentials of how men and women are to act and gives the reminder that the older women are to train the younger women and older men are to set an example for the younger men. This is the basis for the coaching component of parent training and support within this project.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul gave instruction on how to confidently discern the way one should live. In 12:2 he states: “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.”²⁹ As children are launched into the world to lead their lives and raise their families they need strong bearings in the Lord to guide them. Simply put, they need to learn to fill their minds and hearts with the word of God. They will know how God wants them to live and how to bring Him glory and be able to express this in prayer, worship, service and community. In Paul’s instructions to the Ephesians he expanded this idea saying, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”³⁰ Believing parents must endeavor to follow and imitate Christ. Children will likewise imitate their parents. As this is accomplished, the legacy of love and faith is passed to succeeding generations.

²⁸ Titus 2:1-8.

²⁹ Romans 12:2.

³⁰ Eph. 5: 1.

The Apostle Paul gives further guidance to Timothy, his young co-worker and spiritual son, whom he has sent to be a pastor in Ephesus. Paul instructed Timothy to seek leaders to work in the church who exhibit Godly character. In his first letter to Timothy Paul says, "He [a church leader] must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect."³¹ How one acts in regard to his family is an important factor. This scripture reminds parents to consider the responsibility of family management as critical and to teach their children to respectfully obey. One can read in Paul's second letter to Timothy,

Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.³²

This scripture speaks on several levels to parents as they seek to lead their children in the Lord. First, God's word is sufficient to train our children to do whatever it is that God has called them to. It will make them wise. Secondly, it points to the value of learning scripture at an early age and highlights the importance for parents to teach their children as Timothy's mom and grandmother did. With this understanding and basis, Timothy can develop a community of faith and lead a life pleasing to God.

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he reminds them of the fatherly guidance and nurture that he gave them: "You know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into

³¹ 1 Tim. 3:4.

³² 2 Tim. 3:14b-17.

his kingdom and glory."³³ Likewise, today's parents need to comfort, encourage, and urge their children to live Godly lives.

The Statement of Methodology

Most Christians recognize that it is good for the family to be part of a church fellowship for its programming or Sunday morning worship, but have abdicated their role to teach and lead their children in the ways of faith. For many, this is because they themselves were not adequately taught. This concern is compounded by the fact that many have learned to accept life the way it is without questioning if there is a better way. As is true throughout history, the contemporary culture often rules. In today's fast-paced society the "good life" is defined, as in times of old, by the pursuit of beauty/sex, money and power. People seek opportunity to "get ahead", chasing after the world's definition of success, often leaving authentic faith and reliance on God behind. As parents raise their families they tend to focus more on good schools, sports, and other activities that will enrich the lives of their children while neglecting matters of faith. Concerned Christian families will make attendance at worship and participation in children's/youth programming part of their weekly routine, but these are often only a few good things on the slate of opportunities to become all that they can be. Christians may be missing the starting point and focus for these good things; that is God in and through us, around us, and loving us. Parents must continue to develop their relationship with God and make it a part of their everyday family life. This is done in the context of the body of believers so that we may teach the word, love, pray, and support each other.

The strategic design for faith development within the church must both celebrate mile markers of spiritual development and come alongside parents to support them in their personal

³³ Thes. 2:11-12.

endeavor to pass the legacy of faith. As Reggie Joiner's book *Think Orange* reveals throughout, the church and the family together are God's plan for passing the faith. In the Old Testament writings, the family was clearly designated to pass the faith, and the New Testament's genealogies and directives for family interaction also show that "the family exists, even its imperfection, to display the heart of God to every generation."³⁴ The goal is to synchronize the efforts of the church and family so they are working in unity toward the goal of passing the faith and glorifying God. For this project, strategic design and implementation will be evaluated in terms of current and future family life ministry at Rolling Hills Community Church.

Success will be measured by assessing perceived spiritual leadership needs within the family, coordinating with the family life ministry team to implement strategic changes, and measuring participation in the strategy by staff and laity. Overall results will necessarily be seen in years to come, but short term successes will be evaluated through staff and family testimonials of those who participated in specific aspects targeted by this project. The following chapter summaries delineate the development and implementation of this project.

Subsequent Chapter Overviews

Chapter II: Problems Facing the Family Today

This chapter details the state of the family today both secularly and in the church. Current statistics will be reviewed regarding the family problems our society faces and how they

³⁴ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange : Imagine The Impact When Church And Family Collide*. (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 49.

are affecting the body of Christ. These problems are leading young people to leave the church; many never to return. This alarming data needs to be addressed by the church through strengthening our parents and their spiritual impact on their children.

A research tool will be employed in this phase, entitled Spiritual Leadership in the Family Survey, to determine how Rolling Hills Community Church is doing in our family ministry and to design training and support for families as they seek to pass the legacy of Christian faith to the next generation. The results will be used to understand the perceived needs of families at Rolling Hills Community Church and focus on addressing the areas that would enhance the parents' ability to be spiritual leaders in their homes.

Chapter III: The Strategy

The mission statement for Rolling Hills Community Church (RHCC) states "Rolling Hills Community Church exists to bring glory to God by reaching people for Christ and nurturing them in the faith through inspired worship, genuine community and passionate ministry that transforms lives in our neighborhoods and throughout the world." As such, its ministry is evolving to meet the needs of its constituency and community. Since RHCC has a large population of young families, it was felt that a Family Life Pastor, concentrating on the needs of this important demographic, would bring significant transformation in the lives of its congregation. This pastor will work primarily through the children's ministry, but in conjunction with the preschool and student ministries to provide an overarching family focus. Staff, interns, and volunteers would be trained and equipped to assist this effort. Cohesiveness will be sought through this team using a family-oriented curriculum and programming. It is understood that

parents have much more time and influence in their children's lives so this team will work in this critical area so that the church can support and develop parents as family spiritual leaders.

Another significant aspect of the ministry would be to identify mile markers of spiritual development that could be understood and embraced by the entire congregation. These would be highlighted at specific age levels, and parents invited to partner with the church in preparation and celebration. A central characteristic of the church community's overall ministry is to point people to both to accept Christ and to learn to follow Him. Regular emphasis is given to understanding the lifelong path of faith development, and these mile markers would be incorporated into that thrust and teaching. There would be an effort to enlist other ministry areas in support of Christian family life through these mile markers and other special events that enhance family relationships and spiritual development.

Finally, a Parent Coaching Ministry would be developed to train and equip experienced and committed laity to come alongside other parents to support and encourage them through various stages of Christian family life. These Parent Coaches would help instill spiritual purpose in the lives of the families. This is seen as vital to being and living as the Body of Christ.

Chapter IV: Mile Markers

Helping parents and their children understand faith development is central to the training and instruction needed to pass the legacy of faith to the next generation. This involves both cognitive development and societal opportunities to express recognition of growth and personal faith. Parents lead their children to embrace Christianity as they embrace their roles as their children's primary faith trainers. They do this through the time they invest, nurture, prayer, love, discipline, example, conversation, service, and training. This parental faith training is most effective when deliberate and clear. Identifying mile markers along the path of faith

development gives direction and the celebrations mark accomplishment and awareness of what God is doing in the lives of our children. The church will endeavor to support families as children pass six different mile markers in the path of faith development. These will be researched, developed, and shared with families so that the church may partner with parents in growing their children in faith. They include: Mile Marker 1- Family Dedication, Mile Marker 2- Beginning Formal Education, Mile Marker 3- Salvation and Baptism, Mile Marker 4- Coming of Age, Mile Marker 5- Manhood/Womanhood, and Mile Marker 6- Graduation.

These Mile Markers allow church and families to recognize and celebrate each new phase of spiritual growth. These markers give clear entry points to involve others in the spiritual development of children. In fact, several of these Mile Markers can be celebrated corporately within the church and allow for the entire community of faith to partner in these significant and memorable events. This chapter will give detail to the development and implementation of these Mile Markers at Rolling Hills Community Church.

Chapter V: The Design and Process of Parent Coaching

The needs of young families seeking to guide their children to knowledge of God and faith in Jesus Christ is significant and too big a job for a single pastor or individual ministry of the church to address. Much of the older congregation with family life experience needs to be mobilized to give and share with those who have need. God's plan is that the body would use their gifts and talents to minister to others, and everyone who is saved has a testimony of His divine activity in their lives. God uses these gifts and testimonies to equip people for ministry.

All believers are called to minister as they are transformed by God. Much like the great disciples, Peter and John, who were ordinary men, but testified with great courage because they

had been with Jesus,³⁵ today's parents also boldly trust and obey the calling to encourage others in leading their families for God. This, coupled with the directives from Titus 2 to instruct those younger newer Christians in the ways of family living, gives rise to the concept of parent coaching.

Within the Parent Coaching Program, parents who are known for their Christian testimony will be recommended for participation in training and then commissioned to serve. A succinct training design will cover basics including the following topics: what is a coach, coaching as a couple, getting started, home-work, accountability, confidentiality, assistance and referral, communication and conflict basics, understanding roles and responsibilities of parents, personality, learning style, mile marker/passages, and teaching parents how to give blessing to their children. This training would encompass about six sessions, and additional training and support would be made available as the need arose. Parents who completed the training would then be prayerfully matched with younger parents who indicated a desire for coaching on the survey or requested support through the church staff. Coaching would begin with six to eight sessions and extend as long as both couples or parent matches felt was needed. Ideally, a friendship would be formed that would include future contact as needs arise.

Chapter VI: Initial Results, Concerns and Conclusions

This concluding chapter will review both the initial successes and failures of implementing a family life focus at Rolling Hills Community Church that emphasizes parental leadership in the spiritual development of the children. Potential solutions to problems will be explored and the strategy adjusted to meet the needs of this local congregation. Implications for

³⁵ Acts 4:13.

other congregations will be addressed and an appeal will be made for the church to refocus ministry efforts in support of families as the hope for the future.

The Review of Literature

The following includes literature categorized by pertinent subject area as related to this project. A review of a few significant resources in each category shows the importance of these works to this project.

Relationship Development

Chapman, Gary. *The Family You've Always Wanted – Five Ways You Can Make It Happen* ³⁶

In this book, Gary Chapman points out that young families today lack role models for healthy relationships. He explores many essential concepts of parenting including: understanding our children's love languages and developing intimacy, serving together, teaching children to obey and honor both parents and God (boundaries), and leading the family as husband and father. This is central to what RHCC intends to teach/mentor through Parent Coaching.

Clinton, Dr. Tim and Dr. Gary Sibcy. *Why You Do the Things You Do—the Secret to Healthy Relationships* ³⁷

³⁶ Gary Chapman, *The Family You've Always Wanted – Five Ways You Can Make It Happen*. (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2008).

God created us for relationship, with Him and others, yet since the fall in the garden people have struggled. Drs. Clinton and Sibcy have determined that the relationship or attachment style that people developed early in life impacts many of their actions. These styles help people cope and can have positive or negative ramifications in their adult lives. Clinton and Sibcy outline four major styles: Secure, Ambivalent, Avoidant and Disorganized.

The authors believe that identifying personal styles and addressing them with God's power and grace can allow freedom from self-defeating tendencies so that one can develop healthy relationships characterized by love and trust. This book offers a clear view of what may have happened to precipitate the development of these styles of interacting and what they may look like in various relationship scenarios. Key statements are given which typify the attitude of one who acts according to each style. The book is written to allow people to examine themselves, evaluate where they come up short, and hopefully motivate them to change. When individuals have not learned these self-examination skills they may feel that life just happens to them, and that they have little control over it. People must embrace these skills as adults in order to develop and maintain secure healthy relationships. The authors propose that secure relationships are characterized by people who aren't afraid of emotions, are willing to seek and accept comfort from people, take responsibility for themselves, find courage for love intimacy, and act when needed. Drs. Clinton and Sibcy carefully delineate each relationship style and methods for moving toward health. In conclusion, they point out that if a person's relationship with God is at the center of their lives, as they come to know His love, they will better be able to develop secure relationships with others. There is hope in Him. This truth is central as parents seek to relate well to each other and their children.

³⁷ Tim Clinton and Gary Sibcy, *Why You Do the Things You Do—the Secret to Healthy Relationships*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

Crabb, Larry. *Connecting: Healing For Ourselves and Our Relationships*³⁸

Most emotional needs can be met through relationships (connections) within the body of Christ. God's design for the body of Christ is to minister to its various members by His power in us. The fallen world, the lusts of our flesh (sin), and Satan all work together to undermine and spoil the community of faith. Unchecked, this causes people to be unable to love God, themselves, and others.

For Christians, the good and the bad nature live within them simultaneously, but His ultimate truth and goodness are at the center and can overcome. Christians need to learn to tune in to Him and let His power come through their lives and words as they connect and minister to one another. A church congregation that deliberately seeks seasoned Christian parents, who are yielded to the Holy Spirit, to minister to others will impact those families and strengthen the church.

Boundaries and Family Dynamics

Cloud, Dr. Henry and Dr. John Townsend. *Raising Great Kids: Parenting With Grace and Truth*³⁹

Doctors Cloud and Townsend do an excellent job of boiling down the essentials for raising great kids of character. They avoid extremes and talk about parents investing grace, truth and time in their children. The six key character traits they say are critical to develop and internalize are: Connectedness - Relationship Attachments, Responsibility, Reality - living with

³⁸ Larry Crabb, *Connecting: Healing For Ourselves and Our Relationships*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2005).

³⁹ Dr. Henry Cloud. and Dr. John Townsend, *Raising Great Kids: Parenting With Grace and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

ideals and imperfection, Competence - developing gifts and talents, Morality, and Worship/Spiritual Life. They include very helpful developmental charts and sub-sections to identify the focus of grace and truth and the tasks a child would be working on at any given stage. The last section of the book answers specific teenage needs and special circumstances. The goal of parenting is to work ourselves out of a job by raising children to be adults of character. The authors share much wisdom about the parenthood process and encourage families to connect as best they can within their family unit and with the greater support network of the church.

Deal, Ron. *The Smart Step-Family: Seven Steps to a Healthy Family* ⁴⁰

The Smart Step Family by Ron L. Deal was a wonderful, insightful book, giving practical insight into the management of combining families in re-marriage. Deal's approach does not condone the original divorce, but identifies that we are all sinners seeking God's grace. He calls families to honor the new marriage before God in the same way all marriage covenants should be embraced. None of his observations or recommendations are counter to the clear Biblical truth for any family relationship, whether it be the first or beyond. Being married and raising is family is tough and to do it well requires God's grace and direction. There is wisdom in applying many of Deal's insights to the complexities of "first families" as well as any other family structure. The author was able to identify the additional strains brought on by combining biological parents with step parents and siblings and give solid recommendations and strategies for approaching them. He clearly pointed out that these additional strains of family dynamics often yield a greater divorce rate and that Godly principles are needed so that the new family unit will not capitulate and accept eventual demise as well. There is tremendous opportunity for ministry and

⁴⁰ Ron Deal, *The Smart Stepfamily: Seven Steps to a Healthy Family* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002).

outreach support to these families that now comprise nearly half of all family units in our country. This text will be used for coaching step-families.

Luce, Ron. *Re-Create – Building A Culture In Your Home Stronger Than The Culture Deceiving Your Kids* ⁴¹

Ron Luce is a compelling speaker and author who shares in his book *Re-Create* the dire importance of passing on our Christian values and faith to our children in the midst of the culture in which we live. This media saturated world is consistently peddling ideas and ways of life that run counter to the family plan established by God. This includes readily available, sex saturated, and violent media in all forms (cell phone, computer, video games, music, TV, movies magazines, billboards...) that undermine the family, authority, and purity. He encourages families by outlining specific ideas on how to limit and manage these ungodly effects upon our children as well as ways to garner and increase our influence in their lives. He believes that this is the Christian parent's responsibility and is critical for the future of the church. This book touches on the heartbeat of the new direction our church is taking to help parents claim their Spiritual leadership in the family.

Swenson, R. A. *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives, (Updated)* ⁴²

This was a fabulous book for helping people identify what is causing so much pain and relational problems in their lives and giving a prescription for how to restore health. Dr.

⁴¹ Ron Deal, *The Smart Stepfamily: Seven Steps to a Healthy Family* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002).

⁴² R. A. Swenson. *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives, (Updated)*. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004).

Swenson identifies “the pain of progress” as the starting point for unwitting dysfunction. Many good things have come from progress, including technological advances that have brought us better transportation, communicational tools, medical treatment, and the list goes on. However, Dr. Swenson points out that this has led people to into “increasing stress, change, complexity, speed, intensity and overload.”⁴³ The prescription is for people to seek and infuse their lives with more margin, space for developing relationships that heal with God and one another. This is not a call to abandon progress, but to redirect the way it is handled. The idea of saying “NO,” carving out quiet time for rest, relaxation and sleep, living more simply, and learning contentment are key to acquiring margin and the associated health benefits. These concepts are extremely important to consider as parents raise families and seek to have healthy authentic relationships that will model and lead children to Christ.

Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage – What If God Designed Marriage To Make Us Holy More Than To Make Us Happy?*⁴⁴

This is a very insightful book that causes the reader to reconsider the purpose and value of marriage. Marriage is a metaphor used in the Bible to help people understand their relationship to God. He is the King and groom, while the church, each of his people (individually and collectively), are His beloved bride. This most intimate and meaningful relationship, which is the source of new life, is the image He gives us to show us His grace, mercy and ultimate love. Marriages are a training ground in holiness. Husbands and wives need to grow in forgiveness, service, and sacrifice for one another in a way that brings Him glory.

⁴³ R. A. Swenson. *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives, (Updated)*. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 26.

⁴⁴ Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage – What If God Designed Marriage To Make Us Holy More Than To Make Us Happy?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

“We show our love for God in part by loving our spouses well. We can never love somebody too much. Our problem is we love God too little.” As spouses love each other and grow in holiness, they give their children stability at home and can pass on the legacy of God’s love.

Coaching

Jones, Laurie Beth. *Jesus Life Coach: Learn From The Best* ⁴⁵

The author of this book describes coaching in light of God’s Word and the person of Jesus. Jones centers on the key concepts of focus (life mission), balance (what to hold on to and what to discard as well as learning to say no), productivity (bearing fruit), and fulfillment. Using Jesus’ example, coaches can see how to follow Him and how to apply these principles to their interactions with others as they help those being coached to live the Christian life they were called to. Each of the short chapters is followed by probing questions and a prayer that helps the reader apply the concepts to his or her life. This informs the coaching that will be done and helps the coach stay tuned to the Savior. He is the standard.

Light University. *Professional Life Coaching Training Series* including “*Parent Coaching*”, “*Divorce Coaching*”, “*Spiritual Life Formation Coaching*”, and “*Leadership Coaching*” ⁴⁶

This excellent distance learning training program for Christian Life Coaching includes the following topics: Theory and Practice, Relationships and Communication, Facilitating

⁴⁵ Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus Life Coach: Learn From the Best* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004).

⁴⁶ Light University and AACC, *Professional Life Coaching Training Series* including “*Parent Coaching*”, “*Divorce Coaching*,” “*Spiritual Life Formation Coaching*” and “*Leadership Coaching*” (Forrest, VA, accessed 2009-2012).

Learning and Change, Ethical Guideline and Professional Standards, God and Spiritual Development, Coaching Couples, Blessing, Teens and Sex: Parenting With Grace and Truth, Discipline Strategies, Parents' Roles, Single Parents, Step Families, and much more. Each lesson is taught by a leading expert in the field and upon satisfactory completion, an examination leads to Certification. This training program provided excellent ground work for developing a Parent Coaching program at Rolling Hills Community Church.

Faith Development and Spiritual Leadership

Barna, George. *Revolutionary Parenting – Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions*.⁴⁷

George Barna researched adult children who were leading “transformed” lives. Through interviews, these individuals were identified as active in church life as well as engaged in spiritual activities apart from their churches. They had significant personal faith lives and were seeking continued growth. The Barna Researchers then interviewed their parents and put together a synopsis of the characteristics that led these families to a spiritual legacy. Many clear aspects of successful parenting were revealed. Among them was the view that parents are the primary and dominant spiritual mentor of their children. Further, these parents viewed the church community as supplemental to what they were doing in their families. They focused on God’s word and prayer. Their Christian faith appeared to be integrated into every part of their lives and a natural expression of who they are, and they expected the church to reinforce what they were teaching and modeling at home. This discovery fits perfectly with and reinforces the work we are currently doing to enable parents to be spiritual leaders in their homes.

⁴⁷ George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting – Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions* (Carol Stream: Barna Books an imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2007).

Blackaby, Henry and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*.⁴⁸

In this book the authors give an excellent summary of the basic components that play into being a spiritual leader. The authors write that a spiritual leader is a servant leader, one who serves God by “leading people into God’s purposes God’s way.”⁴⁹ This involves the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of those He calls. The leader’s challenge is to follow the timeless truths of God amid the myriad of choices in today’s fast paced world.

God is calling all Christians to be His leaders in their spheres of influence. He will make Christians able to lead in ways far superior to those that are not lead by Him. The bible reminds people that “the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him”.⁵⁰ Christian believers help people to see and follow God’s agenda.

The leader needs to know where he is going so he can help others get there. This must be done by discerning God’s will. Spiritual leaders are careful not to assert their own ambitions or merely asking God for blessing for a path of their own liking. A spiritual leader does not worry about his abilities or qualifications, but trusts God to work through him. He will open the doors for training and experience if they are necessary to accomplish His work. Spiritual leaders do not seek the praise of men, but the authentication and approval of God. Their leadership is based on authenticity and integrity, which brings credibility and trustworthiness. The leaders’ focus moves to people and relationships when they are led by God. As leaders come to know and love Him, they are able to pass on a legacy of faith.

⁴⁸ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*. (Nashville: B&H Books, 2001).

⁴⁹ Ibid, xi.

⁵⁰ 2 Chron. 16:9a.

The marks of a spiritual leader are clear. “Spiritual leaders must take very seriously the weighty responsibility of learning to hear from God themselves before they can hope to equip others to do so... The single most important thing leaders should do is pray.”⁵¹ Hard work reflects commitment and encourages others to join. Spiritual leaders develop healthy routines that do not neglect time with God, or their need for food, healthy activity and rest. Then they are able to give concentrated effort to those things that are important. This includes time with family and friends. This book directly ties the believer to the important truth that the church should be always be in the business of training the next generation and seeking to pass the mantle and blessing on to emerging leaders. This is encouragement, assurance and truth that Christian parents at all stages need.

Fay, William. *Share Jesus With Out Fear*⁵²

This is an excellent book about sharing the truth of Jesus with ease. Natural “conversation joggers” and “share Jesus” spirituality questions that prompt discussion through the sharing of key scriptures are presented. This method is neither intimidating to the sharer or to the one to whom he is talking. The key point for believers is understanding that, in obedience to the Jesus, we must share our faith - the results are His.

This book provides one of the best presentations on how to simply share the Gospel; which is of course, the basis of evangelism. It begins with a relationship in which questions about spirituality can be interjected naturally in conversation. This is accessible to every believer and does not require special gifting or public speaking ability. The plan is to get the responder to

⁵¹ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*. (Nashville: B&H Books, 2001), 148.

⁵² William Fay, *Share Jesus With Out Fear* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999).

read and interpret the Word for himself. No preaching is necessary! Personal persuasion skills and charisma are not essential for successfully sharing Jesus. The word speaks for itself and each individual is given the opportunity to assess its meaning.

Another key strength of this book is the list of common objections and scriptures that addresses those concerns. These scriptures are helpful for sharing faith with teenagers and older people. The book is a very useful tool to focus on the essentials of faith and for anyone trying to pass on the legacy of faith as God intended – His word and the Spirit draw people to Himself and we simply are His tools.

Haynes, Brian. *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting*⁵³

In this excellent book Haynes creates a strategy using seven milestones that families within the church can use to guide their children through the Christian life. With each milestone, he gives core competencies which parents should seek to instill in their children as they approach the next milestone. He also describes practical suggestions for faith talks and milestone celebrations. Much of this concept has been used and adapted for the program that is being developed at Rolling Hills Community Church. The RHCC mile markers and celebrations are a bit different and more functional for our community, but the concepts in this book are solid and in tune with this aspect of our new program.

⁵³ Brian Haynes, *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting* (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 2011).

Kish, Jane A. G., David Stark, and Sandra Krebs Hirsh. *LifeKeys: Discover Who You Are* ⁵⁴

The authors assert that being good Christian parents requires that parents know who they are in Christ and that they too, are continuing to grow. This excellent book takes the many dynamic aspects of the way in which people are uniquely and wonderfully made and helps readers understand how these aspects work together for the purpose God has for them. By considering one's natural design, spiritual gifts, personality type, values, passions, and priorities the picture of what individuals were designed for emerges. This knowledge then helps them to live more effectively for the kingdom, service, and to pass the faith.

Scazzero, Peter with Warren Bird. *The Emotionally Healthy Church*.⁵⁵

“The key to successful spiritual leadership has much more to do with the leader's internal life than with the leader's expertise, gifts, or experience.”⁵⁶ All ministers need to evaluate their inner life as they grow into emotional maturity. Critical dynamics include: the effects of the families of origin, addressing pain and loss (both past and present), accepting oneself with unique gifts and limitations, and being authentic and vulnerable. This is an on-going process that is often very difficult, but which yields great rewards. When Christian leaders become emotionally mature, they are able to incarnate the truth and love of Jesus (allow Jesus to actually live through them), so that they may successfully affect positive change in another's world. This is Jesus' model of love: He entered into another's world without losing Himself

⁵⁴ Jane A. G. Kish, David Stark, Sandra Krebs Hirsh, *LifeKeys: Discover Who You Are* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2005).

⁵⁵ Peter Scazzero and Warren Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

because He knew who He was and what He was about. He was free to love; this should be the aim of the Christian family, as well. Jesus empowers people to love in a way that is different, healing and beautiful. To do this, Christians must seek emotional and spiritual maturity in themselves and pass this love on to their children for His glory.

Strobel, Lee. *The Case For Faith – A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* ⁵⁷

This is an excellent resource for Christians who want to take a deeper look at how God is ordering the world to draw people to Himself, even in the midst of difficult questions. Lee Strobel does an exceptional job of uncovering the truth and helping readers to see God in and through many common objections to faith. Through interviews with experts, Strobel clears away misconceptions and encourages readers to view events, which at times cannot be fully understood, through the lens of trust in our faithful God. This not only encourages the believer, but will also help parents address tough issues with their children.

Sharing Concepts of Purity in Faith and Life

Farrel, Pam, Doreen Hanna. *Raising a Modern-Day Princess - inspiring purpose, value and strength in your daughter* ⁵⁸

This is an excellent resource for moms and dads to use in calling out the womanhood of their daughters and to affirm their places as daughters of the King. The author suggests that daughters select mentors, if possible, and makes concrete suggestions on how daughters can

⁵⁷ Lee Strobel, *The Case For Faith – A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

⁵⁸ Pam Farrel and Doreen Hanna. *Raising a Modern-Day Princess - inspiring purpose, value and strength in your daughter* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2009).

qualify mentors as people who could speak into their lives. The authors also do an excellent job of helping fathers understand their role in their daughters' lives, and prompting them to create a meaningful blessing for their daughters. A rite of passage program is presented as a template for what might be included in a blessing ceremony and how to put it together. This can be done formally through a church program or be initiated by individual families to bless their daughters as they enter womanhood. This book is practical and inspiring, helping call out Christian parents to affirm the highest and best in their daughters.

Gresh, Dannah. *And The Bride Wore White – Seven Secrets To Sexual Purity*⁵⁹

This book gives an outstanding expose of Satan's lies about sex and how our society has bought into them. The author clearly points to God's plan for purity and shares personal stories that point to both forgiveness and hope. This book is an excellent resource for discussing purity in the family, while also highlighting the need for parents to be role models and mentors for their children. It encourages young people to talk to their parents and invite their wisdom and input into their relationships with the opposite sex.

Lewis, Robert. *Raising A Modern-Day Knight – A Father's Role in Guiding His Son to Authentic Manhood*⁶⁰

Robert Lewis harkens onto days of old when men sought a code of ethics, training, ritual and ceremony to confirm what it meant to be a real man. They were knights. They had a noble

⁵⁹ Dannah Gresh, *And The Bride Wore White – Seven Secrets To Sexual Purity* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012).

⁶⁰ Robert Lewis, *Raising A Modern-Day Knight – A Father's Role in Guiding His Son to Authentic Manhood* (Carol Streams: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2007).

cause to which they aligned themselves. With much the same goal, he calls readers to develop a modern day definition of manhood based on the following biblical concepts of manhood.

According to Lewis a real man rejects passivity (takes action), accepts responsibility (willing to work and do the will of God), leads courageously (with the truth of the Gospel and its wisdom, rather than with feelings and desires), and expects the greater reward (joy in life that God gives).

Lewis believes family training should embrace ten biblical concepts: Loyalty – Hosea 6:6, Servant Leadership – Mat. 20:6-27, Kindness – Proverbs 19:22, Humility – Phil.2:3, Purity -1 Tim. 4:12, Honesty – Eph. 4:25, Self- discipline – 1 Tim 4:7-8, Excellence – 1 Cor. 9:24, Integrity – Prov. 10:9, and Perseverance - Gal.6: 9.

Lewis explains why ceremony is so powerful and shares several manhood ceremonies which encompass affirming the biblical characteristics of manhood and blessing the son. Fathers are to do their best to be present and active in their son's lives as a leader and role model and seek collaboration with the church community to pass on the legacy of faithful manhood.

McBride, Jim. *Rite of Passage: A Father's Blessing* ⁶¹

Jim McBride gives outstanding background both scripturally and personally for developing a Rite of Passage Celebration and Blessing for children. He explains what a Rite of Passage means and the importance of using it to bring others into the lives of children who will be able to speak truth and mentor them in the future. A Rite of Passage signifies that the children are ready to be adults and that the parents are standing behind them, believing in them and supporting them. McBride emphasizes the importance of parents raising their children in the faith and not expecting that the church will do it for them. He gives many examples of how

⁶¹ Jim McBride, *Rite of Passage: A Father's Blessing* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011).

parents have conducted a rite of passage ceremony and suggests topics to be discussed by the parents and mentors sometime during the journey: Integrity, Purity, Faith, Hope, Love, and Family. This is a resource and guide for families to use in our church ministry.

Stecker, Dr. Chuck. *Men of Honor, Women of Virtue – Raising Kids That Keep The Faith* ⁶²

This excellent book presents an important point of view about what it means to become an adult. Dr. Stecker believes that scripture indicates that adulthood begins when the physical body changes, and the goal of parenting is to help children *mature* into the young women and men God intends them to be. He points out that the last two generations really have not experienced a wholesome rite of passage, but have been left to create their own markers including pre-marital sex, gang membership, alcohol consumption, or financial independence. Many young adults have enjoyed children's and youth programming at church, but have no bridge to adult life in the church and nowhere to go as they move beyond this stage. As a result they leave the church and possibly never embrace their faith. Christian families and the Church need to step up both to recognize the adult status of these young people, with wholesome rites of passage, and help incorporate them into adult ministries and activities. This gives them a place to continue to grow and serve in adulthood. As they grow and serve, they can develop traits that will help them lead the next generation.

⁶² Dr. Chuck Stecker, *Men of Honor, Women of Virtue – Raising Kids That Keep The Faith* (Colorado Springs: Life Journey an imprint of Cook Communications Ministries, 2006).

Partnership – Church and Family

Haynes, Brian. *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* ⁶³

In this book Dr. Brian Haynes develops the idea that family and the church need to partner to influence families for Christ in the years to come. His premise is based on the plan God revealed for spiritual formation of generations that is found in the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4-8:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.⁶⁴

Dr. Haynes recognizes the very real need for the church to strengthen parents as they grow in their faith and help them to share it within the context of everyday family life. A church effective in this area would intentionally help parents recognize different stages of development and celebrate milestones in the lives of their children. Haynes encourages parents to be primary spiritual influencers in their children's lives.

The Shema passage is also the basis for this project's family focus with Rolling Hills Community Church. This book builds upon the Shema and is a very good framework for developing true family ministry and shifting the balance of teaching faith concepts back to the family unit as supported by the church. This new way of looking at the legacy of faith is the shift from the more hands off approach of parents who let the church teach their children during specific church programming hours to parents who let the church affirm and support the faith work being done in their homes.

⁶³ Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland: Group Publishing Inc., 2009).

⁶⁴ Deut. 6:4-9.

Joiner, Reggie. *Think Orange – Imagine The Impact When Church And Family Collide...* ⁶⁵

The concern that many youth (estimated 70 -80% ⁶⁶) are walking away from the church when they leave home was the impetus for the author to look for a new paradigm for passing the faith. This statistic indicated that many well-meaning parents were focusing on giving their children experiences and things while missing the essential elements of passing the legacy of faith. This book highlights the fact that God called parents to teach their children faith, and the church is called to support that effort. Joiner uses the concept of mixing colors to create a third option, to help God's people understand how combining the effort of the church to pass on the Christian faith with the efforts of the family will create something new to impact the next generation. Family which is designated red, for warm hearts, combined with Church designated as yellow, for bright light, creates a dynamic combination for passing the legacy of faith, seen as orange. Red and yellow together always produce orange and likewise the Church and family working together will produce succeeding generations of Christians. This, orange aspect will be qualitatively different than viewing red or yellow alone. Parents have significantly more time with their children than any church leader, ministry, or combination thereof. To maximize influence in children's lives, the church is called to come alongside parents to equip them to lead and support the work they are doing in the family.

This book was a catalyst for Rolling Hills Community Church staff to reorganize and place focus on Family Ministry. Over two years ago, the RHCC youth pastor was inspired by the

⁶⁵ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange – Imagine The Impact When Church And Family Collide...* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009).

⁶⁶ Scott McConnell, "Lifeway Research Finds Reasons 18 to 22 year-Olds Drop Out of Church" *LifeWay.com*. August 7, 2007. <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/LifeWay-Research-finds-reasons-18-to-22-year-olds-drop-out-of-church>, (accessed August 23, 2014).

concepts in this book and decided to move out of youth ministry and refocus his work to center around supporting the family in the church. RHCC now has a new Youth Pastor, and the former Youth pastor is now the Family and Children's Pastor. Further, this concept propelled this author's personal ministry in Family Coaching and later the development of mile markers which RHCC uses to help parents lead their children as they grow and celebrate that growth as a church family.

Joiner, Reggie and Carey Nieuwhof. *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity – Connecting Your Family To A Wider Community*⁶⁷

This book acknowledges that parenting is hard, but there is hope. It delineates how parents can partner with the church and other like-minded believers for support in their efforts to raise Godly children. The authors share personal stories and insights to help parents engage their children in relationships that authentically lead them in their faith development. They point to God, the direction given in His Word, and the body of believers as agents for passing the legacy of faith. The goal is for parents to help their children learn to *be* the church, not just “go to church,” by modeling, teaching, and helping them engage in personal ministry experiences where they both serve and receive the blessing that God gives when following His will. The children's ability to emulate this increases as parents strategically position their family within the church and invite other Christians to speak into their children's lives through intimate personal relationships.

⁶⁷ Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof, *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity – Connecting Your Family To A Wider Community* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO
PROBLEMS FACING TODAY'S FAMILY

Throughout history family has been the backbone of society. Its strength or weakness affects all aspects of life including the secular and the holy. As author Reggie Joiner explains,

Although the concept of family has had different expressions in every generation, it has always been significant to our existence. Governments are organized, walls are built, and battles are fought for the sake of families. It is the core of civilization and a primary influence on the human condition. Family has shaped the fabric of social, religious, and political structures of every civilization. The heart of the family affects the direction of every child and the future of every nation.¹

The diminishing strength of the family and its influence on the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth of the children gives rise to great concern. Many changes in our society over the last sixty years have compromised the traditional family unit that previously typified America and needs to be carefully examined and understood in order to address current needs. On the back of the acceptance of the theory of evolution, people began to question their understanding of creation and likewise the faith and life standards of the Judeo-Christian heritage of this nation. In the 1960's, prayer was outlawed in public schools and biblical references began to diminish. This trend has continued to escalate and now there appears to be a negative bias towards Christianity.² This may be due, in part, to the basic tenants of the faith which not only uphold the belief in the one true God, but contend that the Bible is God's Word and a reliable standard of unchanging truth. Christianity is viewed as both narrow, with Jesus being the only way to eternal life with God, and damaging to the freedom of choice. Situational ethics seem to

¹ Reggie Joiner. *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide...* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 50.

² Michael J. Chapman. "ANTI-CHRISTIAN BIAS IN EDUCATION." *Newwithviews.com*. November 9, 2007. <http://www.newswithviews.com/Chapman/michael1.htm> (accessed May 22, 2013).

rule in many cases, and people don't want to make the hard choices that Christian faith demands. We can see this played out in many arenas of life including the high rates of sex outside of marriage and abortion. With this clear step away from the faith that the Founding Fathers of the United States used to guide and direct their establishment of its government, Americans are losing the very impetus that made their country free.³

Governmental intervention through the educational system and social service programs continue to grow. These are areas that were previously addressed by the family, the community, and the church. With more government, we have more need for uniformity and control. The idea of "separation of church and state" has been completely reversed in its meaning. No longer is it interpreted that the state should not dictate the workings of religion and faith, but rather that religion should have no say in secular governance or in the public mores in general. In fact, it seems that many people who serve in the political arena struggle to uniformly exercise their faith and their involvement in the legislative process. Some believe that the two cannot coexist, or at the very least that faith should not overtly inform and guide political decisions of the government. U.S. citizens seem to have a growing dependence on the government rather than God.

With this strong governmental influence in our schools and society, including its separation from Christianity, a new kind of young adult is emerging. He is to be tolerant of all ideas and faiths, given many opportunities without qualification, and his self-esteem protected. This sounds good and noble on the surface, but where does this ideology truly teach children to be discerning and productive members of society? This is an important question for any culture

³ Michael J. Chapman. "ANTI-CHRISTIAN BIAS IN EDUCATION." *Newswithviews.com*. November 9, 2007. <http://www.newswithviews.com/Chapman/michael1.htm> (accessed May 22, 2013).

to ask of itself. American society does not seem to acknowledge a universal standard of right and wrong outside of the government.

People still have God's innate design for moral standards even if they don't recognize its source. And perhaps some children are learning discipline through being taught Godly principles through hard work, navigating success and failure, and appropriating forgiveness and hope. However, the enemy would choose to confuse people into believing that they don't need God first and foremost and that they should certainly not try to influence their families for faith in Him. The enemy seems to whisper, "They need to be free to make their own choices." Indeed, ultimately faith is a personal issue, but Christians must not forsake the teaching of their young people. They must use their influence well and not allow the ideation of political and social freedom and tolerance to stifle that calling. Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."⁴ This freedom that comes from knowledge of Christ is the freedom people need, but if they don't know Him, they will miss this truth. It is imperative that parents teach their children so that they will experience God's grace, have freedom from the grip of sin, learn to make wise decisions and truly worship. In turn, their integrity will positively affect society.

Today, children have more choices than ever. This may lead to a greater chance of encountering confusion and possible dilution of contemplative thinking, reasoning, and relationship skills. With the acceleration of technological development, Americans live in an age of change, with information constantly at their fingertips. There is much they can learn or experience through this magnificent growth. Many tasks are easier, there are medical and scientific advances that almost boggle the mind, and there is great opportunity to specialize in

⁴ John 8:31-32.

work and study. It seems that Americans are no longer dependent on personally providing for all their own basic needs. Contrary to what one would expect, this appears to encourage people to attempt to do more instead of relaxing and enjoying each other and the goodness of God's creation. Richard Swenson, a physician and author states

Something's wrong. People are tired and frazzled. People are anxious and depressed. People don't have time to heal anymore. There is a psychic instability on our day that prevents peace from implanting itself very firmly in the human spirit. And despite the skeptics, this instability is not the same old nemesis recast in a modern role. What we have here is a brand new disease.⁵

He goes onto to explain that while progress has eliminated many of the pains of the past other unexpected pains have taken hold. The disease of 'margin-less' living figures prominently in our current scenario.⁶ Without margin people have little time and space to develop a foundation of relationship with God and others. They may also have trouble truly understanding and embracing the need to rest and thereby garner emotional balance. People do not seem to have more leisure time with these advances; they just pack more into the day. Gordon Sullivan and Michael Harper called this "compression of time" the defining characteristic of the information age.⁷ In this state people have less time to respond to any event and thereby experience additional pressure and stress. In fact, because communication to the world at large is so accessible, many have trouble disconnecting for any significant down-time, personal fellowship, or rest. Dr. Richard Swenson points out that this lack of margin, which seems to affect most everyone in the western culture, can affect well-being overall and relationships suffer. He has noted that, "when we are emotionally resilient we can confront our problems with a sense of

⁵ Richard A. Swenson, MD, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives, (Updated)* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 16.

⁶ Ibid, 17.

⁷ Gordon R. Sullivan and Michael V. Harper., *Hope Is Not A Method.* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997), 48.

hope and power. When our psychic reserves are depleted however, we are seriously weakened.”⁸ This is what happens when people try to process more information in less time on a regular basis. Some might call this stress. There is certainly a lot of attention on it these days and much current physical and mental illness has been linked to this problem.

The manner in which technology is affecting communication can provide insight into one aspect of this dilemma. The way in which the culture uses the now common tools of technology may indeed be limiting deeper and significant relationships. Technological advances have allowed mobile handheld communications devices to almost become an appendage for the majority of young people and most people in business today. Information is at their fingertips, yet they need more than that to develop meaningful relationships and community. People can have a variety of social interactions through the phone and internet. They email, text, and tweet at almost any time, yet their actual in person time is diminishing in quality and scope. Christian counselors Dr. Hart and Dr. Frejd share in a recent article that, “Science warns us that as our brains shift toward new and more stimulating technologies, they drift away from fundamental social and contemplative skills.”⁹ Studies show that the Mosaic generation (born between 1984 and 2002) is choosing to use their technological devices to play games, listen to music, or view media independently of those around them, while the previous generation chooses to use technological devices to engage with those around them.¹⁰ Those that are actually

⁸ Richard A. Swenson, MD. *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives, (Updated)* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004)79.

⁹ Arcibald Hart and Sylvia Hart Frejd. "Modern Stress, Technology and Parenting." *Christian Counseling Today*, Vol.18, No.2 (n.d.): 16.

¹⁰ George Barna, *FUTURECAST – what TODAY'S TRENDS mean for TOMORROW'S WORLD* (Austin: Barna Books an imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2011), 14.

communicating with others are often using instant and truncated language that limits the richness and depth of conversation. The Barna Group reports that

[one] of the greatest self-perception changes over the past decade is in how Americans see themselves in relation to others. For all the technological advances in the past decade, the desire for human connectedness remains. Ten years ago, slightly over one out of 10 Americans self-identified as lonely. Today, that number has doubled – a paradoxical reality in the full swing of the social media age.¹¹

Barna's surveys indicate that over 40 % of adults (and 2/3 of the younger Mosaic population) report they are looking for a few good friends.¹² While they want these significant relationships, social media seems to miss the mark and, they still allude many.

This is true even in family life. Preeminent researcher in the intersection of American culture and religion, George Barna, further states that “some analysts argue that the social needs that used to be met through family engagement have to some extent been replaced by the network of relationships that both parents and children now nurture every day online, in social networking environments.”¹³ Today, one can see a family going on a walk or jog together, but each is independently connected to their devices and not interacting with one another. Or they may seen sitting down together in the family room after dinner, but their televisions, computers or tablets are on with headphones connecting to them or some other media device while they have family time. Really? George Barna clarifies the problem when he points out that “... it has become common to mistake physical proximity – being in the presence of others – for genuine

¹¹ Barna Group, "How the Last Decade Changed American Life." Barna Group. July 31, 2013. <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/624-how-the-last-decade-changed-american-life#.Ufl7aI3VBsm> (accessed July 31, 2013).

¹² George Barna, *FUTURECAST – what TODAY'S TRENDS mean for TOMORROW'S WORLD* (Austin: Barna Books an imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2011), 17-18.

¹³ *Ibid*, 45.

relationship.”¹⁴ The truth is even though family offers the most influential relationships, it is suffering too.

It is often argued that societal morality is being influenced by the proliferation of media. In researching media influence, George Barna reports that “...the typical adult allocates more than fifty hours per week to media absorption. In fact, the only activity that takes more of our time is sleep.”¹⁵ As reported by The Harrison Group 2006 Teen Trends study, children spend even more time in media consumption: 72 hours per week in 2006¹⁶ and as little as 3.5 minutes a week in meaningful conversation with their parents.¹⁷ Media consumption has become so commonplace that many do not think it extreme to spend such great amount of time pursuing it. Marketers realize that media is essentially the primary vehicle used to perpetuate consumerism and define ambitions so they do their best to exploit the opportunity to affect the consumer. Along these lines, advertisers use sex to sell products that consumer mindsets embrace. Pediatric researchers state that, “advertising is a pervasive influence on children and adolescents. Young people view more than 40,000 ads per year on television alone and increasingly are being exposed to advertising on the Internet, in magazines, and in schools... Sex is used in

¹⁴ George Barna, *FUTURECAST – what TODAY’S TRENDS mean for TOMORROW’S WORLD* (Austin: BarnaBooks an imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2011), 17.

¹⁵ Barna Group. "How the Last Decade Changed American Life." *Barna Group*. July 31, 2013. <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/624-how-the-last-decade-changed-american-life#.Uf17aI3VBsm> (accessed July 31, 2013).11.

¹⁶ Stephanie Olsen. “Teens and Media: a full-time job.” *c/net*. December 7, 2006. http://news.cnet.com/2100-1041_3-6141920.html (accessed March 15, 2014).

¹⁷ Norman Herr, PhD. ,“Television and Health.” *Internet Resources to Accompany the Sourcebook for Teaching Science*. 2007. <http://www.csun.edu/science/health/docs/tv&health.html> (accessed March 15, 2014).

commercials to sell everything from beer to shampoo to cars.”¹⁸ Further, recent research reveals that teenagers' exposure to sexual content on TV and other media may be responsible for earlier experience in sexual activities.¹⁹ The extent to which this affects the current views on sex and morality is uncertain, but there is a clear message to seek products that will instantly gratify and seemingly increase sex appeal or power. With the increased time spent in media exposure the greater the impact becomes. This leads to concern about associated impact on family life and the expression of Christian values.

Recent data about the family structure shows that in 2008, an estimated 733,000 U.S. teenagers (ages 15-19) became pregnant.²⁰ Of these approximately 106,000 had miscarriages, and 192,000 had legal abortions.²¹ In 2010, 9.3% of all U.S. births were to teens, and 20.1% of all non-marital births were to teens.²² Without even addressing the issue of abortion, these figures are astounding. Child Trends analyzed 20 years of Federally-collected birth certificate data from the National Vital Statistics System and found that “... the majority of births to women under age 30 occur outside of marriage. This trend is not just among young women. Non-marital births have been on the rise among all women in the United States over the past several decades, in part because of the increasing percentage of couples who have a birth within cohabiting

¹⁸ American Academy Of Pediatrics: Children, Adolescents, and Advertising Committee on Communications, "PEDIATRICS." *Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*. Vol. 118:6 2563-2569 (December 2006). <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/> (accessed May 18, 2013).

¹⁹ Rebecca L. Collins, Marc N. Elliott, Sandra H. Berry, David E. Kanouse, Dale Kunkel, Sarah B. Hunter, and Angela Miu. "Electronic Articles: Watching Sex on Television Predicts Adolescent Initiation of Sexual Behavior", *PEDIATRICS: Official Journal of the American Pediatrics*, Vol. 114 No. 3 (September 2004): e280 - e289.

²⁰ Carmen Solomon-Fears. "Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: Statistics and Programs" *Congressional Research Service*, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS20301.pdf>. (2012), 1.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

relationships.”²³ Sex outside of marriage continues to increase and Barna reports that “for more than four out five people, their first sexual experience occurred outside of marriage.”²⁴ In 2011 and 2012, over 40% of all births were to unwed mothers.²⁵ All of these statistics are of increasing concern because the family unit is being compromised. Further, as the number of children born to unmarried parents rise, they are “more likely to be poor and to face multiple risks to their health and development, even when born to parents who live together in a cohabiting relationship.”²⁶

The trend now is for people who choose to get married to do so at a later age. “The average age when a person first marries has risen from twenty among women and twenty three among men in 1960 to twenty-six among women and twenty-eight among men in 2010.”²⁷ While this may provide for more economic stability initially in a marriage (and this is important especially in times of recession and decline); it also impacts the dropping marriage rate. Divorce continues to claim about 50% of marriages. This, in turn, also affects the family. The absence of a parent, especially the father, has devastating effects on the children. The National Fatherhood Initiative revealed in an article entitled “*The Father Factor*” that children without fathers were

²³ Carol Emig, "Sorting Through the Data on Nonmarital Births." *Child Trend - Trend Lines*. February 22, 2012. <http://blog.childtrends.org/2012/02/22/sorting-through-the-data-on-nonmarital-births/> (accessed February 6 2013).

²⁴ George Barna, *FUTURECAST – what TODAY’S TRENDS mean for TOMORROW’S WORLD* (Austin: BarnaBooks and imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2011), 22.

²⁵ Brady E. Hamilton, Ph.D., Joyce A. Martin, M.P.H., and Stephanie J. Ventura, M.A. "National Vital Statistics Report, Volume 61, Number 5." *Births: Preliminary Data for 2011*. October 3, 2012, 4. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr61/nvsr61_05.pdf (accessed February 26, 2013).

²⁶ Carol Emig, "Sorting Through the Data on Nonmarital Births." *Child Trend - Trend Lines*. February 22, 2012. <http://blog.childtrends.org/2012/02/22/sorting-through-the-data-on-nonmarital-births/> (accessed 6 2013, February).

²⁷ George Barna, *FUTURECAST – what TODAY’S TRENDS mean for TOMORROW’S WORLD*. (Austin: BarnaBooks and imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2011), 28.

more likely to be poor, abuse drugs, be involved in crime, and/or have emotional/behavioral problems.²⁸

The church needs to be able to minister to this wide variety of families and share God's truths for hope for the future, yet currently it is often missing the mark. Significantly, people of faith tend to exhibit greater marital stability²⁹ so, from a purely societal concern; Americans need to encourage faith development and commitment. It seems to follow that if the church put more focus in the faith development of families it would help. Those who profess faith in Jesus have an even greater motivation to share the truth, but because of societal pressures, parents err on the side of tolerance. Not wanting to impose their will on their children or others, they set young people up to never truly embrace the faith and then later walk away from the church.

Christians have a critical window of opportunity while children are living at home to minister and teach them the faith, and the church needs to support parents in this endeavor. It should be noted that, "nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13 (43%), and two out of three born again Christians (64%) made that commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday. One out of eight born again people (13%) made their profession of faith while 18 to 21 years old. Less than one out of every four born again Christians (23%) embraced Christ after their twenty-first birthday."³⁰ Clearly, the years at home are a very significant time to influence children to become Christ followers.

²⁸ National Fatherhood Initiative, *THE FATHER FACTOR- Data on the Consequences of Father Absence* (2011). <http://www.fatherhood.org/media/consequences-of-father-absence-statistics> (accessed February 8, 2013).

²⁹ Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D, "Why Religion Matters Even More: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability." *The Heritage Foundation - Leadership For America*. (December 18, 2006). <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/12/why-religion-matters-even-more-the-impact-of-religious-practice-on-social-stability> (accessed March 12, 2013).

³⁰ Barna Group, "Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids." *BarnaGroup.org*.(October 11, 2004) [.http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids](http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids) (accessed February 8, 2013).

Spiritual training that begins in childhood will help a safeguard a life of faith later. This follows the biblical directive in Proverbs 22:6 to “train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Because the data shows that most of a child’s foundations (including behavioral habits, core values, and primary spiritual beliefs) are established by the age of thirteen,³¹ Christian parents need to be diligent at home and church to instill the truth of God’s Word in the hearts of children and do it in such a way that they engage with Jesus. Modern Christians need to address the concerns clearly expressed by Nic Allen, Family Life Pastor at Rolling Hills Community Church that

[I]t’s up to us as parents to call out the purpose in our children. We’re to help them identify the things of God so that they may recognize Him and praise Him. Unfortunately we are living in a day when, although Christian parents feel the responsibility of spiritually impacting their kids, most do not feel equipped or take any time during their day to talk about God or faith. My great fear is that we are living in a world of cultural Christianity to such a high degree that there actually exist very few Christ followers. People like Zechariah, who go through the worship motions, but when given a moment to encounter real truth from a real God, they cannot believe in Him.³²

Young people need to experience God through the authentic way in which the adults in their lives reflect Him in their relationships. They can then experience God’s love and seek Him. A relationship with God is more than knowing about him. Parents do not want their children seeking the significance that a relationship with God brings in unhealthy places. Speakers and authors on cultural trends and ministry, Josh McDowell and Thomas Williams point out that “[o]ur kids are not out there looking for knowledge; they are looking for experience. They’re not banging on the doors of peer acceptance, sexual experimentation, drugs and gangs in order to

³¹ George Barna, *FUTURECAST – what TODAY’S TRENDS mean for TOMORROW’S WORLD* (Austin: BarnaBooks and imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2011), 50.

³² Nicolas Allen. “Be Present in Your Family.” *Rolling Hills Community Church*. Franklin, TN: Sermon (November 2012).

learn facts, but in a desperate search for firsthand experiences that will satisfy those driving needs for relationship.”³³ The church must proactively seek to support and minister to parents so that they may pass on the legacy of faith within their families, thus strengthening both the church and society.

³³ Josh McDowell and Thomas Williams, *The Relational Word: A Biblical Design to Reclaim and Transform the Next Generation* (Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2006), 40.

CHAPTER THREE

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGY

The fundamental strategy for this program is to develop a focus on family ministry as well as a ministry team to instigate and support an understanding of faith legacy within each family unit and its implementation. Henry Blackaby, Christian author and speaker on experiencing God and following His will, says that (paraphrase) “if you want to be in God’s will you need to discern where He is moving and join Him.”¹ Blackaby's thoughts are very applicable to the development of family ministry. Many fine Christian leaders are beginning to focus their teaching and writing on the calling and responsibilities of the Christian family in perpetuating the faith, perhaps because there has been such demise in recent years to the sacred institution of marriage. This confluence of awareness has touched many in our local congregation which has a high percentage of young families, and caused the leadership to consider the best way to be the church family in this age and place. With preaching the truth of God’s word, growing, giving and service firmly in place, there is an increasing desire at RHCC for ministry to and through families.

God specifically used Reggie Joiner, Carey Nieuhof and the Re-think Groups literature along with works by Brain Hayes and others to impress and focus the church’s thoughts on a more dynamic approach to ministering to and ‘growing’ young people in the faith. Recent shifts in the thinking of our society have left a gaping hole in many churches with so many young adults failing to embrace church as we have known it. There are many reasons for this, but undeniably the traditional family unit (ordained by God) no longer functions as the backbone of our society. As a result we are struggling on many fronts – including the church. So many

¹ Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 72.

counterfeits for meaning in life have left us and our children exhausted and empty. The opportunity to address this need for meaning by “[f]ocusing on people... is perhaps the one area in which churches and parents could most comfortably work life-changing outcomes, yet such partnerships are uncommon.”² The emphasis must return to caring for families and training them in faith so they may lead purposeful Christian lives.

Brian Haynes, author and Pastor of Spiritual Life at Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy Texas, expresses that he believes, “[f]amily is the relational context in which we offer the most authentic view of our faith, whether positively or negatively.”³ He goes on to say, “Two kinds of Christian parents exist in the world today: those parents who live spiritually as standing stones and those who live as stumbling blocks. Standing stones walk as Jesus did. Christian parents living as standing stones aren’t perfect but they are pursuing an authentic relationship with Jesus.”⁴ These parents are poised to positively influence their children, yield stronger churches, and enhance societal stability. Josh McDowell and Thomas Williams affirm this understanding in their book *The Relational Word* saying that, “[w]hen parents, teachers, and youth workers model God’s heart for relationship to our kids and those around them, we have a realistic hope of reclaiming an entire generation for the kingdom of God in spite of pervasive influence of culture.”⁵ The church needs to empower parents to lead their children to God. It is a necessity for the church to support this effort in every way possible. Clearly, it is the family of God that perpetuates faith in Him from generation to generation. As Paul so plainly taught, this is best

² George Barna, *FUTURECAST – what Today’s Trends mean for Tomorrow’s World* (Austin: BarnaBooks, 2011), 50.

³ Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today – Digital Version*, Loc. 1640.

⁴ *Ibid*, Loc.1659.

⁵ Josh McDowell and Thomas Williams, *The Relational Word: A Biblical Design to Reclaim and Transform the Next Generation* (Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2006), 16.

accomplished through the body of Christ. Believers are to use the gifts and talents God have given us to support each other in all manners and matters. Essentially this involves both the physical families and spiritual family. They must unite and not allow the corrosion in and between them to become an untenable gap that keeps us from effectively passing on the legacy of faith. God is moving to encourage just such a renewal.

With this understanding, RHCC shifted its ministry focus allowing for a team approach to our children's education and training encompassing all ages with family life at its center. This began with the creation of the formal position of the Children and Family Pastor who works as part of the team with the Preschool Minister and the Youth Pastor and beyond that with the staff as a whole. His primary focus was not only to work in conjunction these other children's ministries, but to encourage and support Christian parents in our congregation. Care for the Christian family took on innovative dimensions.

A new integrated curriculum by Think Orange called 252 Basics⁶, was quickly adopted and embraces the parent's role in teaching their children. It is designed for parents to do things at home all week with their children as they teach bible concepts for faith development and then be supported by the classroom training and worship that the kids experience each week when gathered together. Quarterly, there is a family worship night which incorporates all these concepts and in which the parents are participating. This is a very meaningful and fun training tool both at home and when they are gathered at the church building. The goal is to empower the parents to lead their children and create lifelong connections to the church as the body of Christ.

Special events such as the Daddy- Daughter Ball, Fight Night (nights of encouragement for fathers fighting for their families' faith legacy), a conference focused on becoming a Godly

⁶ Rethink Group, Inc., "252 Basics" *Orange*. 2012. <http://whatisorange.org/252basics/> (accessed 2012).

young woman, and the Father-Son Bowl⁷, exposing them to God's people and His word in a supportive and fun setting, so not only were members of RHCC blessed, but others as well.

These and other new opportunities will continue to be embraced and supported by RHCC as they fulfill the calling on families to live for Christ.

This thesis project fell neatly into the direction that Rolling Hills Community Church Family Ministries was taking. The author was able to join the Family Ministries team to pursue some specific avenues in which the church could increase its family support. The team met several times a week for the better part of a year to dream, plan and design avenues that would increase the spiritual leadership of parents in their families.

To ascertain the next steps in helping parents take the spiritual leadership in their families, the team began by creating a survey to uncover perceived spiritual needs among parents in the church. Through prayer and study, the Family Ministry Team believed that there were some untapped areas of ministry that could enhance spiritual leadership in the family. Hence, included in this survey were questions designed to ascertain parents' understanding of developmental stages, their desire to have seasoned Christians coming alongside for support, and the level of connectedness to others in the same stage of life. In the Rolling Hills Family Survey we collected basic demographics, with contact information optional. The survey asked questions to help understand parents' current personal spiritual development and worship experience; questions pertaining to children, thoughts and feelings about raising them; and the relationship with them, questions about family as a whole, including the desire for fellowship and coaching; and finally questions to gather information about how parents and their family interact with RHCC. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements with

⁷ This is a community event scheduled just before the Super Bowl for fathers and sons of all ages to join and play together.

the following scale: 1 = not at all; 2 = not much; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = strongly agree; and 5 = totally agree. A place for comments was made available at the conclusion of each section. In order to make it easier for parents to respond, the survey was launched electronically through Google Forms, and as an incentive to complete the survey, every twentieth responder received a Sweet CiCi's ice cream gift certificate. A copy of the survey questions is attached in the Appendix.

The survey had ninety seven initial respondents, which was a very encouraging indicator of the openness and concern of Rolling Hills Community Church parents to raise their families well. The survey results confirmed much of what was sensed by the family life leadership team. Generally, parents wanted more opportunities to socialize and have fellowship with other Christian families, and many were not completely satisfied with their current spiritual state and leadership of their families. Also, a large number indicated that they'd like to understand and celebrate developmental stages and would like coaching from other more experienced Christian parents. This gave the team the impetus and direction it needed to encourage, train, and support families.

Initially, family interaction activities were explored and enhanced. Social activities were instituted or expanded, including game nights, play dates, parents' night out and a recently instituted Young Family Social. These opportunities immediately began to address the fellowship needs of RHCC. Interns and others provided staff support and planning for these events and were instrumental in making these on-going programs successful. The RHCC staff members on the family ministries team continue to evaluate and revise these activities to improve their reach and effectiveness and add new opportunities as they arise. The goal remains

to encourage Christian fellowship for families without overwhelming their already busy schedules.

The team also encourages, as part of ongoing church ministry, joining in community groups. This provides training, fellowship, and accountability with others in the church community. This small group setting is seen as critical for members to grow and is an excellent platform for community service. Childcare is subsidized so that no family is precluded from participating. Often these groups are related by age and stage, but there are many intergenerational groups as well.

As part of this project the Family Ministry Team began to study and investigate two specific aspects of developing parents to be the spiritual leaders in their families. One key element was the recognition that parents often need to be more confident in their own faith development so that they can naturally share it in their families. After examining a wide variety of RHCC ministries, it was felt that, while there is always room for improvement, many good opportunities currently exist for personal spiritual growth and are being accessed within RHCC. These include excellent Bible teaching during our Sunday morning worship, as well as community groups, bible studies for men and women, recovery groups, mentoring, special seminars throughout the year, materials made available for personal study, and much more. A recent church-wide initiative called “Next Steps” includes a commitment to read through the Bible through a daily step plan in the next two years. This familiarity with God’s Word will be a huge boost for families and all the RHCC community. With this in mind, the Family Ministry team was able to focus more specifically on the expressed spiritual needs of RHCC parents in and for leading their families. This conveyed desire gave evidence that the church needed clear direction for developing the spiritual life of a family and personal support to navigate the often

muddy waters along the way. The RHCC Mile Markers for families and the lay Parent Coaching ministry emerged out of this process. These will be delineated further in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

MILE MARKERS

An essential element of the Rolling Hills Community Church ministry is helping people discover God and walk with Him. Annually RHCC pastors walk the congregation through the Trail Guide, a document created to remind the church members of their faith journey and outline steps they need to take to continue to grow in faith. The message of the trail guide is that, while all Christians may be in different places, they are all on the journey to a fuller life in love and service to the Lord. Each stage is marked as people explore the ‘ins’ and ‘outs,’ the ‘here’ and ‘there’ aspects of the trail.

The trail guide identifies Preparation as Marker 1. This preparation sets the faith foundation for growth and connects people with others in the Christian community at RHCC. This might entail the following elements: In: joining a small group; Out: developing relationships with others who do not know God yet; Here: Church service opportunities; and There: Local ministry and serving the community. As people continue through the trail guide, each stage marks a deeper and fuller commitment. Moving on to Marker 2, Pursuit is a deliberate journey of growth, focusing more on personal preparation and discipline. Marker 3 helps to delineate individual Purpose. Christians investigate how God made each person uniquely to serve the body. Marker 4 is identified as Practice. Here, people evaluate where they have been and invite others to join them on the journey. This is not the end of the journey, but a new level, and Christians continue on, this time walking the trail with someone else. At this point people are encouraged to join training classes and become mentors or serve in mission training and leadership.

In keeping with this trail guide the Family Ministry Team saw many ways to integrate these concepts directly into the Rolling Hills Family Ministry. As a Family Ministry Team, it was decided that the Rolling Hills would benefit from identifying and exploring similar markers celebrated specifically in the lives of children. Providing parents with concrete markers that match their child's physical and mental development is vital in helping them set goals and raise Godly children. After development, these Mile Markers would be incorporated into the Trail Guide for Rolling Hills and focus goals for each stage of development of the children in a Christian family. For each Mile Marker that is celebrated by the church body, training would be offered to help prepare the family and ensure that its meaning and purpose are understood. Some of these classes were already existent and merely needed to be refined, while others would be created by the Family Ministry Team.

Much has been written on affirming the growth of a child as they mature; this is frequently referred to as milestones. In the context of the church, it marks a passage or developmental achievement that is significant in the life of the young person as he becomes a believer and follower of Jesus. Often, these milestones are associated with giving a Blessing. Gary Smalley and John Trent have written much on the great value and real necessity for giving "the blessing" both to those in our immediate family and those to whom we are associated. This blessing is deliberately expressed through the parents' words and actions so that the child feels valued and loved. Their book, *The Blessing - Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance*, focuses on training parents to bless their children because childhood experiences are so powerful in shaping lives and affecting the future.¹

¹ John Trent, PhD. and Gary Smalley. *The Blessing – Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 6.

In his book, *The Rites of Passage*, Jim McBride explains that the biblical blessing “[takes] many forms, but a key idea in blessing is to set aside someone or something for a special, holy purpose. It can also mean to praise or glorify as well as to keep and protect.”² The Family Ministry Team explored many points of transition that may be considered milestones for teaching goals, celebration, and blessing; bearing in mind what each step would look like at RHCC. In doing so, the team realized the great value of being able to aim for specific marks of spiritual maturity and to celebrate what God is doing in our families. The process focuses our efforts to age appropriate goals and gives unifying direction to our family ministry across age groups.

Starting with the beginning of life, the team identified Family Dedication as the first Mile Marker. Many parents choose to dedicate their children to the Lord, recognizing that they are both a gift and treasure. There is a strong understanding that parents are stewards – pointing their children to the Lord and the life He would have for them. The church needs to support families on their first steps to building faith, being stewards of their children’s lives, which is why this Mile Marker is an important one to mark and celebrate. Before the ceremony a Family Dedication class is required so that parents can learn what the Bible says about being a Christian parent and how to become the primary faith teachers for their children. As much as parents love their children they know that God loves them more and has a plan for them. During the Family Dedication Ceremony parents commit themselves to sharing the gospel with their children and living out a life, as much as they are able, that is pleasing to the Lord. They commit to teaching and bringing their children up in the faith. The gathered family, friends, and members of the congregation witness this commitment and offer prayer and support. A blessing is given to the

² Jim McBride, *The Rite of Passage – a father’s blessing* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011), 31.

children through sharing the meaning or significance of their names, sharing a chosen verse to guide them, the laying on of hands, and prayer. The hope is that one day each of the children will come to a saving knowledge of our Lord and pledge their lives to Him. This dedication acknowledges the parents' commitment to lead their children in the way everlasting. A celebration follows.

The Second Mile Marker identified by the Family Ministry Team is *Entering Formal Education*. While not readily seen as a spiritual milestone, the team sees marvelous application. This affirmation of the school-age child comes at a significant time in his the development, when he has learned to express himself verbally, become inquisitive, physically more independent, and ready for formal education and training. Often, children will be comfortable for several hours away from their parents as they are entrusted to other teachers outside the home. Generally, children begin to read in Kindergarten; which opens vast new vistas for them: they can now go places through the written word and learn new things on their own.

This is not only a wonderful academic milestone, but is one RHCC as a church body wants to help families recognize as a spiritual Mile Marker in light of their child's new independent access to the Word of God. In years gone by, the Bible was often the book that children used to learn to read. While this is not usually the case today, the team still wants to put God's Word in their hands. It is the greatest book they'll ever read! At church, RHCC recognizes the end of this milestone year with a celebration, at which time children are presented with a Bible devotional of their own. During the ceremony, parents will also pass a blessing to their child as he or she celebrates this spiritual marker.

Mile Marker 3 is *Salvation and Baptism*. This, of course, can happen at any stage of a person's development, even at death's door, but in terms of the family, the church recognizes

that as soon as a child is able to understand the Gospel they may want to make a commitment to Christ. As with adults, this will happen at different times for different children because they must respond as they are ready and the Holy Spirit calls them. The understanding of the gospel message is at the core of what is shared through Family Ministry.

As a part of their ministry environments at Rolling Hills, kids are repeatedly presented with the truths that God made them, loves them, and desires to be in a relationship with them through His son Jesus. The church forms a partnership with parents who are leading their children toward personal relationships with Jesus Christ. Then, the church and parents join together to celebrate a child's spiritual birthday with baptism. Kids who voice their trust in Jesus for salvation or who have expressed a strong desire to become a Christian can attend a Baptism and Belief class, which is offered monthly, with their parents. The class clarifies what it means to be baptized, helps confirm the child's understanding of what it means to follow Christ, and prepares him for baptism. RHCC understands that the Baptism celebration is a testimony to the inward act of faith that has already taken place. A class is also offered for adults who have made a confession of faith and want to follow it with formal baptism. It is wonderful to hear testimonies and share, as the larger church body, in these events, which take place during worship services at least once a month at our church and other locations. Often parents or other significant adults are given the honor of performing the baptism and blessing the new Christian.

Mile Marker 4 is recognized as *Coming of Age*. As children begin to develop physically into young men and women and leave their childish ways behind, they also are poised to embrace a more mature faith. RHCC want to recognize this change and celebrate it with families in the context of the church because the church believes that it is important that young men and women are prepared both spiritually and emotionally as they enter adulthood. This is a time that

parents can challenge their children to grow and serve. The youth learns to take ownership for his response to God in his spiritual growth and developing character.

The Coming of Age celebration, the timing for which is to be determined individually by the parents³, is usually marked by some special family event. The church supports the parents by giving them ideas for this event and testimonies about how this can be done so that parents may deliberately seek to give their children a blessing as they prepare for adulthood. This is an important rite of passage that mothers can do for daughters, fathers for sons, or can be done together by both parents. It often involves other significant adults who serve as mentors to the young men and women and pledge their support to the family and the young person specifically. RHCC is instituting an annual meeting for parents interested in learning more about the Coming of Age mile marker so that they may deliberately choose mentors and mark this milestone of life with gifts and blessing.

In order to help facilitate a coming of age mentality within our Sunday morning teaching settings, children entering the sixth grade move into a three-year world of pre-teen/early teen discipleship. During the three years of sixth through eighth grade, this Sunday morning environment prepares a child for the journey through the teenage years and partners with parents to help a child transition from childhood. Parents are encouraged to share with their children the concept of purity and follow this with a commitment to honor God with their minds and bodies. As mentioned above, the church provides resources that parents can use to create a special celebration for the family as the child comes of age. In the church setting, RHCC hosts a celebration at the close of the child's third year in the middle school class to give families and kids a moment to commemorate the experience together.

³ This is celebrated somewhere between the age of 11 and 14.

Mile Marker 5 recognizes *Manhood/Womanhood*. The passing of a child into adulthood is a significant process. Biblically, parents must equip their children to become men and women of God. In our culture, age sixteen is the year teens experience new freedoms and thus might be chosen as the time for this milestone, but each family can decide the exact time that it would be appropriate to celebrate this milestone with its spiritual implications. At the time that manhood or womanhood is recognized, children are still an integral part of the family, but are making adult decisions and learning to function as an adult on the family team by taking on more responsibilities for themselves and others. When parents bless this time and recognize the child's growth, it honors the child and helps ease tension that may otherwise develop when this growth goes unacknowledged. Parents may use this milestone to proactively invest in their child by affirming their development and blessing them.

At the same time, students need to see the importance of their role and responsibility in the Body of Christ, take on the characteristics of Christ, share Christ with their friends, and develop spiritual disciplines. RHCC works to partner with parents in the journey of leading their young adult to become a man or woman of God and equip parents to be their child's spiritual leader as they make the leap to adulthood. Young adults began to understand this concept with the previous mile marker, Coming of Age, but now they are able to put it into action in their own life setting. The church provides parents ideas for creating a special manhood or womanhood event to mark this significant step in the spiritual development of their son or daughter.

The final family Mile Marker that the Family Ministry Team identified to celebrate within the RHCC community is High School Graduation. As this time approaches, parents deliberately begin the difficult task of preparing their sixteen to eighteen year old to move on from the comfort and protection of home to their next place in the world, often moving out of the

home and off to college or a job. Preparation for these changes takes practical and spiritual skills that involve applying biblical principles, determining the will of God, making wise decisions, owning and sharing their faith, defending their faith, giving well, and even the future possibility of marriage and family. The resources that the church provides at this marker equip parents to take advantage of the few years kids are still at home to mold them into faithful followers of Christ.

At the end of high school, RHCC hosts a graduation celebration that marks a meaningful and memorable end to this time. The church and family are able to together acknowledge each student's adulthood, celebrate their gifts and talents, and pray for God's direction, protection, and peace in their lives. This can be done privately, but also will be offered as a ceremony of blessing by the church. Family, friends, and mentors will be invited and have the opportunity to call out the character strengths and qualities that they enjoy about the young person. They will share in picturing a special future that God has in store for each child, as they offer their prayers and blessings. Parents release their children fully into the care of their Heavenly Father and celebrate all He has done and will do in the life of that precious child of which they were a steward for all these years. This is a beautiful time of renewed faith both for the student and the parents.

There are more mile markers that could be identified and celebrated within the church. Indeed, many more will be celebrated, but for the scope of this project and the RHCC Family Ministry, these Mile Markers highlight the spiritual growth of the children within the family and the parent's corresponding responsibilities. These Mile Markers have been published in the RHCC Trail Guide, outlines have been posted in the children's area for parents to pick up, and the RHCC area ministry leaders have these mile markers as their guide for teaching and ministry.

It is exciting to be able to focus ministry efforts within the church to specific and timely needs for the family as each child grows in his faith. With the church community's support and love as they grow in faith, a generation of spiritual champions for God will make their mark in the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DESIGN AND PROCESS OF PARENT COACHING

Parent coaching falls directly in line with the biblical directives for believers to use their gifts and talents to edify and support the body and pass the faith. The concept of parent coaching is less intimidating for many than counseling and opens the door for more intimate intergenerational ministry. As Reggie Joiner points out, “parents need to be coached on how to coach and they need real models that help them model.”¹ It was encouraging that many young families at RHCC expressed through the survey and through informal discussion that they would love to have someone come alongside of them to support their efforts to raise their children for the Lord. Often they indicated that they are far from their biological families and don’t have that support close at hand. Barna rightly asks, “If you do not accept your God-given responsibility to raise your children to be spiritual champions, how do you expect such a transformation to happen?”² Parents with young families may be excited about their growing family and want to do it right. They may be overwhelmed, unsure, dealing with difficult situations or children. The vision for spiritual maturity in their children begins with a clear notion of the outcome desired and the steps for growth to occur. As parents embrace the Mile Markers in their child’s development they learn to coach their children for success. Many young parents could be blessed to have experienced Christian parents walk with them through these various seasons of life. Evidence for the benefits of having a coach are clearly seen in sports and music training, but the same is really true in every aspect of life. In his research on Christian parenting, George

¹ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange – Imagine The Impact When Church and Family Collide...* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 62.

² George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting – Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna, 2007), 17.

Barna asserts that, “the idea of coaching is consistent with the biblical notion that we are not complete and perfect on our own; we need the assistance of wise mentors and a community of people who care about us.”³ Developing Godly support for parents and their families should be addressed by the local church congregation and can be significantly impacted through Parent Coaching.

A staff of Christian Life Coaches would be of great value for churches as they go about preparing parents to become the spiritual leaders of their families that God called them to be. However, with the size of Rolling Hills Community Church and the preponderance of young families in the congregation, it was clear that this would not be easily accomplished. Further, it is unlikely that young families know enough about Parent Coaching to be willing to both seek and pay for such support on their own outside of the church. Members of the Family Ministry Team also recognized that they were not equipped as a staff to meet this identified need in the congregation. Therefore, RHCC desired to mobilize the body to serve as they have been called to do in Titus 2. Basing this ministry on sound doctrine, older, more experienced parents would be able to pass their Christian wisdom and commitment to family life on to the next generation. Prayerfully, the process of developing a Parent Coaching Ministry began.

This author was designated by the Family Ministry Team as the Parent Coach Coordinator and joined the team for bi-weekly meetings for the better part of a year to dream, design, and plans this ministry project. It was felt that there needed to be some training generated through the church that would give a base coaching candidates to share their life experience and faith, allowing them to intentionally interface with other families while giving them love and support. In order to give it more credibility, Parent Coaching needed to be a church-endorsed

³ George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting – Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna, 2007), 17.

ministry and a legitimate conduit for connecting parents to the coaching partners was necessary. Parameters for the form and function of parent coaching needed to be defined and expectations set. It was also felt that RHCC may need to raise awareness about body-life, ministering within the congregation, so that members would be more willing to serve in and to the congregation and to help overcome the reluctance others may feel by revealing weakness or need for support. In this way the program would be breaking new ground.

The Family Ministry team began to generate a list of experienced parents with a solid Christian testimony. Prayerfully, the team considered those to call to participate in the training based on anticipated needs younger families might present. This included single parents or couples who have navigated various stages of child-rearing, adoptive parents, divorced and/or parents with blended families, parents of a special needs child, and homeschool parents. The team understood that because of the numerous demands in all aspects of family life on the young church that many mature leaders would not be able to participate on the first round of training, yet it was hoped for the critical few to get the ball rolling.

It was determined that the training should be able to be accomplished in about six sessions so that candidates would not feel overwhelmed by the commitment to complete the training, yet they would get enough substance to feel confident about proceeding as coaches. Parent coaching was designed to be a lay ministry without formal credentialing, although the trainer would be credentialed; however, the specific qualifications of a Christian life testimony and participation in coach training would be required. Further, it was desired that the trainees be given concrete information and homework that they could then employ in their own coaching experience. As this was an important part of the overall ministry within RHCC, those who completed the training would be formally dedicated for this Parent Coaching Ministry in a

blessing ceremony. At least one pastor would be involved in this service, thus giving each participant the church's approval and validation. A training program was developed based on these parameters, researching and consulting other coach training programs and employing counseling basics.

Throughout the development of the training, the goal was to exponentially reach families that no one person could alone. God would use their testimonies to love and support others and guide them to a fuller expression of faith and spiritual leadership in their own families. Though basic coaching skills were learned and practiced, ultimately reliance rests on the Holy Spirit to guide and direct the coaching relationships for His glory.

Topics for each training session were developed and the training notebook is included in Appendix E. The importance of understanding the reasoning behind the training and its spiritual basis is foundational to the program.

The Shema, as mentioned earlier, is central to the understanding of God's directive for His people to know Him possibly touch through the unique way God created each of these and pass the faith on to the next generation. God gives specific directions through Moses about how to do this as part of their everyday experiences so that He is remembered often and kept a part of their lives. God promises blessings to those who follow these directions and are obedient to Him.

Before getting into coaching logistics, the training opened with a discussion of the Biblical basis for the Parent Coaching program. All training should be in complete harmony with God's word. The bible offers many clear directives for passing the faith on to the next generations. The training begins with Deuteronomy 6:1-9. The coaches focus on these words and what they mean, remembering that God is the One and Only True God. The coaches were encouraged to identify and verbalize the central fact that believers are called to love Him with all

that they are and to share this with their children. This is the God-given plan for spiritual formation. Parents need to specifically embrace the sharing of knowledge and faith in God with their children throughout the day, every day, utilizing teachable moments. This concept is central to the work of parents and families so they may pass the legacy of faith. Further, it is important to insure coaches understand the definition of legacy. Legacy is an inheritance, birthright, or heirloom. Specifically, spiritual legacy would be teaching and developing children in the Christian faith. Without it, people would lose sight of God, and future generations would be ensnared by sin.

The training went on to explore how Christians are able to do all that is asked in these verses? Moses said, in essence, parents should utilize the natural rhythms of family life. This includes the following elements: talking about God's Commands when you sit at home, when you walk along the road (travel time), when you lie down (bedtime: "tucking in", evening prayers, family worship), and when you get up (morning devotion, prayers, blessings...). As Christians are in relationships within their families they should share their relationship with God and what that means. Psalm 78: 1-8 perfectly outlines this as it commands parents to hear and tell of God's praiseworthy deeds to the next generation. They then need to follow this pattern so that all people will come to know and follow Him.

Children need to hear about God and the truth of His love in order to be saved. They need the confidence that remembering God's faithfulness brings, so that they are truly able to follow Him. In the New Testament the Apostle Paul reminds us, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not

heard?”⁴ The goal of Christian parenting is indeed that “they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commands.”⁵

Parents must remember that they are the ones who have primary access to their children and that it is their responsibility and privilege to pass the faith. Their children need to hear from them. It is imperative for parents to help their children know truth so that they can stand up to the challenges from the world. The influence that parents have must be understood and intentional in nature. In his research on raising spiritual champions, George Barna discovered that parents who earnestly accept the role of being the primary and dominant spiritual mentor of their children are active in their community of faith and see the church as supplementing their parental calling.⁶ These parents understand that they must know God’s Word and discuss it with their families, pray for them, and model a relationship with God so that their children learn to turn to Him when they are making decisions on their own. George Barna recognizes that successful parents “are able to integrate their faith into their lives more seamlessly than most people... and that the absorption of their Christian faith into every dimension of their life also makes the transfer of the critical perspectives and principles a more natural process for them.”⁷

With this understanding, the coach trainees direct their attention to the role they are called to play in this process. Titus 2:1-8 is a passage that highlights the biblical goals of Parent Coaching. This scripture clearly states that all training should be based on following sound doctrine; that is following the Word of God. Godly people will be marked by their love and respect, kindness,

⁴ Rom.10:14a.

⁵ Ps. 78:7.

⁶ George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting – Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna an imprint of Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2007), 95-96.

⁷ Ibid. 101.

reverence, integrity, self-control, endurance and purity. These character traits should be modeled and taught to the next generation of parents. This scripture has much to say about the way men and women are to act, and reminds Christians that the older women are to train the younger women and older men are to set an example for the younger men. This is the basis for coaching component of parent coach training. The church body learns, grows and holds each other accountable that they may be fit to teach the younger parents. Parent Coaches are leaders and role models with the parents they walk alongside.

At the end of the training introduction, parent coach trainees discussed what they are to teach the parents they coached as they interact together. Based on this scripture women would learn to love the husbands and children and to be self-controlled and pure. They would exert their influence in the nurture of their families and be kind. Further, spouses should follow the order that was given for husband and wives in Ephesians 5:21-33– women showing respect and subjecting themselves to the spiritual leadership of their husbands and the husbands are to love their wives and be willing to lie down their lives for them. Older men are to encourage the young men to be self-controlled and do what is good. As they teach they should show integrity and soundness. Coaching focuses on these directives by developing individual relationships couple to couple and family to family.

Unit 1: Key Concepts of Coaching

As the scriptural foundation is set coach trainees need to begin to understand what coaching means and how it would work. Some practical information and practice is follows so that coaches develop confidence in what they are doing and why.

Coaches need to know who they are and be able to articulate what they believe.

It is critical that families know up front that their coaches are coming from a Christian worldview. This worldview includes: an understanding of the concept that God is the creator of all and is active in history, past, present and future, that He came to set people free from sin and to enjoy His presence forever⁸, and that He designed the family and the church to pass the faith on to the next generation. These concepts are discussed thoroughly to ascertain that there is no misunderstanding. This goes back to the Shema found in Deuteronomy 6 1-9.

It is important in training to be clear about what coaches are not. Coaches are reminded that they need not be experts, but offer themselves as fellow sojourners who have walked this section of the path of life before. They will not solve their problems, but help connect parents to the One who will see them through. A Coach is not a Counselor. They do not help parents resolve complex problems from their past. Those kinds of issues (i.e. abuse, neglect, etc.) are referred back to the church staff.

At this point trainees learn what coaches are and what they do including some basic concepts about coaching to help both the coach and the parents they are working with to take positive action. These understandings need to be embraced and employed throughout coaching. Coaches need to be “working” in the present and looking toward the future. Coaches come alongside parents to help them make the changes the parents want. They can do this by providing accountability, comfort, wisdom, and encouragement as a family moves towards its goals.

Coaches may share from their personal experience; this is their living testimony, but the focus always must remain on the parents they are working with and not themselves. Direct advice is limited, but ideas are shared. Coaches try to draw the plan from the parents and not create one for the parents they are working with. Coaches rely heavily on God through prayer

⁸ This is the Gospel message which promises an eternal relationship with God.

and the presence of the Holy Spirit when they interact with those they are coaching. This takes the pressure off for personal performance and puts the proper emphasis and trust where it belongs: in God. Coaches must not work in their own power, but His.

Coaches are reminded that confidentiality is essential. They will not share information without the parents' request unless they are made aware of a potentially dangerous situation. Coaches become representatives of God and must act with integrity.

Many of coaching candidates are coaching as a couple; therefore, Unit 1 covers both the advantages and difficulties of that dynamic. A coaching couple is ideal when both parents are together in seeking support; however, it can sometimes be a tricky situation to navigate. Generally, husbands will address husband and father concerns, and wives address wife and mother concerns. Sometimes, coaches will need to represent the spouse's perspective. Coaches need to be sensitive to one another and yielding both to each other and the Holy Spirit so that no conflict arises between them as they try to help another couple. The coaches' relationship will model for the parent couple with whom they meet. Much of what is learned is actually caught not taught. The parents that coaches come alongside will be watching their coaches and imitating them whether it is overtly planned or not. Coaches have to be careful, respectful and loving toward one another and as they interact with the parents they are coaching. Obviously, this may have the added benefit of helping the coaches to grow as well and points to the need to be directed by the Holy Spirit through prayer. Every coaching session should be preceded by prayer and included in each session as appropriate.

Finally, it is important for the coaching couple to debrief with each other as coaches at the close of each session. They need to share insights and help each other to be the best communicators they can be. It is possible that an issue that the parents who are being coached

present may trigger a tender or unresolved concern for one or both of the coaches. This needs to be honestly and prayerfully handled so that the best can be given to the coaching relationship. The coaching couple needs to be able to continue to work in a united manner. Reviewing and clarifying these points immediately after each session enhances the future interactions.

Every family is different so there is no formula for sessions; however there are some key elements that coaches will want to incorporate in the time together to keep it productive. While timeliness and homework action steps are essential, so is the movement of God in the dynamic of the coaching relationship. This concept is reviewed throughout the Parent Coach training. Coaches need to help set the coached parents at ease. Coaches must let their conversation be natural and friendly. The meeting place should conducive to sharing and logistics, such as determining the initial number of sessions, meeting time, length, and location discussed up front. Commitments will be made to this plan and to timeliness. Coaches may plan that after the formal commitment to the meeting period they can reassess to determine if they'd like to continue getting together. Long-term friendships may be forged, but this does allow for either party to gracefully end the formal arrangement. Coached parents should understand the goals for the relationship will be determined by them and that they can expect their coaches to help them identify an action step and give the homework. Unified expectations for coaching sessions help establish the course of the time together. Coaches will both pray and follow-up between sessions for accountability and connection.

Homework ideas are shared throughout the training to be completed by the trainees as an example and practice for their coaching experience. Some homework ideas include: sharing a song that speaks to a stage of life or needs, charting the family operating style, role playing,

genograms, family history and expectations, and seizing teachable moments. These are explained more fully in the training handbook.

Unit 2: Communication

In this unit of training, the basics of communication are explored. Trainees learn how they can apply these basics to both the relationship between coaches and parents as well as to the relationship between parents and children. Key aspects in this unit include establishing a positive environment, developing good listening skills, responding to strong emotions, understanding the difference between judgment and discernment, and the garnering the basics of conflict resolution.

One of the first keys to a good interaction is to set up the meeting in the least distracting environment possible so that full attention may be given to those you are talking to. Generally it is best to be in a place where your conversation can be confidential but the first meeting may be in a public place so that it is less threatening. Ideally it will be neither too hot nor too cold and neither too bright nor too dim. Coaches should plan accordingly so they can exhibit a relaxed and natural welcome. They should smile and not appear overly serious. Change and new situations like meeting with a coach can be difficult for parents. Cell phones should be turned off or muted and the coaches should let the relationship develop naturally and not seem scripted. Coaches learn to use encouraging gestures, like nodding, and exude open and positive body language.

Listening skills are critical for a positive interaction. Most adults need to believe they have been heard and understood before they are willing to be vulnerable and trusting. This in turn is critical for relationship development and coaching. Catherine Hart Weber, PhD identified listening as a key for effective transformational communication and conversation. She was able to break it down into four significant aspects of listening. They include: Active Listening,

Soulful Listening, Reflective Listening, and Spiritual Listening. Active Listening is where one hears the actual words said and gathers the facts. They exhibit positive body language, nodding, leaning in, etc. Soulful Listening is empathetic. The coach listens with compassion, not judgment. In Reflective Listening the coached parents know that the coaches have heard them because they hear their words repeated and clarified. The coaches try to notice gaps in the story and body language as it is being expressed. Finally, the coaches pray for insight and discernment about what they are hearing and observing. This is Spiritual Listening.⁹ These aspects of good listening are discussed, reviewed and practiced in the training sessions.

Another important skill for the coaches to learn is how to respond to strong emotions. During the training they are taught to expect emotions to surface when couples are working through difficult or challenging areas. They must be addressed with patience and the coaches need to learn not to over react and become highly emotional themselves. Galatians 6:1-3 reminds the people to restore fellow believers gently. This is not to say a coach must be stoic, but he should be calm. Proverbs 15:1 helps them remember that a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

When someone expresses strong emotion it can be a great relief for them. Coaches who witness this with parents, or parents who witness this with their children, need to be prepared to act in a composed, supportive way. Give people time to cry. Silence is often very powerful. Coaches learn to sense the Holy Spirit moving in these moments. A coach learns to lend stability by letting the parents know that they are not over-whelmed. Coaches learn to give appropriate gentle touch and reassuring words exhibiting the safety and God's peace.

⁹ Catherine Hart Weber, PhD. "Relationships and Communication: Core Coaching Skills, DVD Series 101, COCH 104." *Life Coaching Professional* (Forrest: Light University, 2008).

In line with this understanding of emotions coaches learned to distinguish between judgment and discernment. Coaches have to be careful not to make judgments themselves about the parents they are working with and also to help parents refrain from judging. Jesus said, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”¹⁰ Coaches need to be able to separate the sin from the sinner enough to show God’s mercy and love and gentle correction. The coach learns to rely on God’s word for correction just as the Apostle Paul directed his young protégé, Timothy, with this instruction, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”¹¹ If there is an area of concern coaches learn to search God’s word for direction and not lean on their own understanding. This was particularly important to young Timothy, who likely had to deal with believers who were older than him. Likewise coaches learned that they must rely on God’s word so that truth could be heard. They in turn help the coached parents to do the same in their families. This process needs to reflect the love of God and be shared with gentleness and respect.

It is often hard not to make judgments both as a coach and as a parent. At a foundational level, a parent is responsible for the direction and correction of their children. When a child is young this is very direct. This is not judgmental correction, but protective guidance. As a child ages he must see parents relying on God and correction based on His Word. The coach learns to demonstrate this to the parents much as the Heavenly Father does for them. The words of Hebrews 12:5-7 explain this well:

¹⁰ Luke 6:37.

¹¹ 2 Tim. 2:16-17.

And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” Endure hardship as a discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ¹²

As a child grows, he becomes more active in the process of adapting behavior and internalizing God’s Word to inform his own conscience. He discovers that parents make mistakes, but God is unchanging. While parents entrust their children to God as infants through Family Dedication, they learn to do this experientially as their children become more independent. Coaches learn to help parents set boundaries, enforce consequences and to widen those boundaries as their children approach adulthood. Although this may be difficult at times, it is God’s design and the coach learns to encourage and support parents in this process. Discernment is displayed by the coaches as they come alongside the parents, brainstorming with them, and helping them to identify possible ways to move beyond the current circumstances with which they may be struggling. If coaches have experienced similar difficulties they learn to share appropriately. Coaches learn to exhibit acceptance and to encourage parents to take the next steps toward positive change. Not only will coaches be helping the parents they are coaching with whatever their issues are, but they will be modeling the way of Christ. Jesus didn’t come to condemn; He came to set people free. He gave them new sight and direction. Coaches serve in a like manner.

The last portion of this training session is dedicated to the basics of conflict management. Coaches learn about the “fight or flight” reactions to difficult situations. Understanding that automatic survival responses overshadow reason helps both the coaches and the coached parents recognize when they need to take a break in order to gain a rational perspective on the problem.

¹² Heb. 12:5-7.

Coaches develop their own signal for their need for a time-out with their spouse and share this as appropriate with the parents they are coaching. They also learn the benefits of keeping short accounts. Which, in biblical terms, means learning NOT to sleep on it (Ephesians 4:26). Dealing with issues as close to the time they arise allows them to be cleared away and remembered no more. Often when issues are not addressed they compound future concerns and escalate negative interactions.

Another key factor that is also included in this essential review conflict management is avoiding gunpowder words, such as always and never. These words give no leeway for correction and tend to be very condemning rather than problem solving. Further, coaches are reminded to stick to one subject at a time with the agreement to return to tangent issues if they are still volatile after the current one is addressed.

Parent coaches learn to listen without interruption and summarize what the other is saying, whether they agree with it or not. This helps the coach to listen well and allows the other person to know that he has been heard, which builds trust. Coaches practice this during training and are encouraged to train those they are coaching to do the same if they are in the midst of conflict. They are reminded that parents are a team and they are to attack the problem NOT each other by sharing truth and seeking forgiveness. They are encouraged to forgive whenever possible, even if the other has not repented. This does not mean giving permission to hurt again, but to cut off a bitter attitude that may entangle the relationship and cause further pain. Parents can likewise apply these concepts to the people in their families.

Finally coaches learn to ask powerful questions such as ‘Why do you feel that way?’ or ‘What is one thing you could do?’ The questions are open ended, but directed toward taking

positive action. The coaches are to seek the mutual consent of those they are coaching to try whatever it is that they identify as a step toward resolution and then hold the parents accountable.

Unit 3: Roles and Responsibilities and Understanding the Effects of Heritage

Parents are primary teachers and guides for their children in all areas of life, though they don't always think of childrearing that way. As Reggie Joiner indicates in his book *Think Orange* the church and the family are God's plan for passing the faith. Parents have much more exposure to their growing children than any person in the church. They have great influence. Joiner goes on to remind the church that, "[I]t is important to help parents understand that their role is not to impress their children or anyone else with their ability to parent. Their role is to impress on their children the love and character of God."¹³ However, many parents have expressed that they are not sure how much they should push their children to embrace the faith and seem to ere, either on the side of 'backing off' rather than 'pressing in', or presenting what may seem like a legalistic view of matters of faith. Family roles and responsibilities are different today than they were in Biblical times so direct application and a viable balance difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, the timeless truths of God's word stand the test of time and are helpful for parents today.

To open the coach training session, coach trainees look again at the time when the wandering Israelites were about to enter into the land God promised them. Moses gives specific instructions to all parents and families on how to maintain and pass the legacy of faith. Moses'

¹³ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide...* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 48.

carefully chosen last words, loving guidelines on passing faith, are recorded in Deuteronomy 6: 4-9.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. *Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.* Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. ¹⁴ (Italics mine)

Many parents today do not demonstrate this consistent relationship with God and His word and seem to have lost sight of this spiritual directive to take every natural opportunity to share it with their children. They have relinquished this command; perhaps because our society encourages tolerance, individuality, and options from a plethora of worldviews. Families are broken: some people are parenting alone, while others functioning in a blended family. How then, in the midst of our world today, can parents pass the faith to their children and be the best parents they can be? Answering this question is a key part of parent coaching.

Trainees learn that a good place to begin with families is by reviewing the roles parents have as mother/wife and father/husband. This can be followed by having the parents individually answer questions about their expectations for the roles they carry. Then, they can bring their lists together, discuss them, and devise a plan to raise their family and honor their commitment to each other. Single parents can identify the places they need their extended family to assist and then deliberately seek support.

Generally the mother is considered the keeper of the home. Though roles are changing with so many women today working outside the home, women still bear the children and are usually seen as the primary nurturer. There is much talk in society today about the “Super Mom”. She is the one that can work outside the home all day, keep the house clean, raise the

¹⁴ Deut. 6: 4-9.

children, and cook up a good meal. She is the primary schedule keeper and taxi service. Those who somehow navigate this territory know that much of the “Super Mom” mystique is a facade. It does not take long when talking with the perceived “Super Mom” to discover that she may actually feel as if she is ‘spread too thin,’ possibly hiring a housekeeper/cleaning service, or wishing she could, using a lot of prepared or fast food, and sadly only truly interacting with her children after work and weekends while trying to keep up with other household responsibilities. She generally is exhausted and can unwittingly neglect her husband and children as well as her spiritual life. Because some of the greatest gifts she will pass on to her children as their first teacher and keeper of the family life are nurturing attention and love, neglect in these areas can be devastating. Award winning Christian author, Tim Stafford, acknowledges that a mother’s nurture of her children is one of her most important assignments but reminds her,

Before you feel burdened with a mile-long list you can never follow through on, let me be quick to say that nurturing is not about "doing it all" or doing it perfectly. It's about doing the best you can — without losing yourself or driving yourself crazy because your own needs aren't taken care of. You won't be able to nurture your children if you're exhausted from burning the candle at both ends.¹⁵

The importance of the mother’s role must be recognized so she can be helped to do her best while always showing the grace that God shows us.

Fathers not only support the family by acting primarily as the bread-winner and authority, but he also serves as the one who validates all of the others members of the family. He does this by showing that each child and his wife that individually they are a valuable part of the family, beautiful and worthy of his attention. He is the spiritual leader, revealing his commitment to God and his family. These roles are vital to a child’s development, so fathers need to be engaged

¹⁵ Tim Stafford, “Parenting “The Real Job of Moms”.” *Focus on the Family* (2014). http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/parenting_roles/successful_parenting/real_job_of_dads.aspx (accessed April 2, 2014).

with their children at every stage and give them the gift of blessing. This concept of blessing will be discussed later in the training.

In 1999, an article was written about the “non-essential father” in an apparent effort to change the structure of families.¹⁶ It was stated that women can work as well as men to support the family and that men were not even needed for procreation, as women could seek artificial insemination. Single parents and homosexual parents are now perceived to be able to raise children every bit as well as any other family structure. Sadly, the facts are that when the father is absent, the children exhibit increased delinquent behavior, decreased academic achievement; higher rates of sexual deviance, increased eating disorders and other addictions, as well as depression.¹⁷ Fathers are very important.

Step Families are families that form when one or both of the parents have divorced their previous spouse. No matter how amicable the separation was, there will still be hurts and trials to overcome as new couples form a family and seek to make this new union work. If children are in the home, another layer of adjustment and coordination is added. Often, there are other parents outside the home, who will play a role in the family life, as well.

Within step family marriages, the commitment to God and each other as spouses must remain strong. The need for patience and communication is multiplied as they work to blend their families. Trainees learn that an excellent study to do with these parents is *The Smart Step Family* by Ron Deal. In this study, Mr. Deal helps parents discover a redemptive God who

¹⁶ Louise B. Silverstein and Carl F. Auerbach, “Deconstructing the Essential Father” *American Psychologist* Vol 54(6), (June 1999), 397-407.

¹⁷ David Stoop, PhD, "Strong Fathers/Strong Sons and Daughters." *cbc-youth.com*. 2012. <http://www.cbc-youth.com/pdf/Christian%20Counseling/Unit%202/Session%205.pdf> (accessed February 13, 2012).

loves, forgives, and provides strength for the journey.¹⁸ He addresses pitfalls and challenges that this family unit will encounter and helps them to persevere and embrace a new life with hope. The church has always been pro-family, but broken families are often ill-equipped for the future. Ministry to this very large group of the population of people in our churches must be addressed and Parent Coaching can be one way to do just that.

After going over family roles, it is an ideal time to discuss family style with coaches having them create a genogram or family tree tracing significant patterns to discuss various issues as they have been passed down through the generations. For example, parenting style, faith orientation, divorce and blended family dynamics, health concerns, addictions, education, special abilities and more can all be passed down within families.

Later, the parents can extend the chart to include their nuclear family. Discussion should center on how their family of origin has affected them and what they would like to pass on to their children. There will be divergence between the individual parents' responses. These differences reveal expectations and help the parents understand each other as they determine how they want to lead their family together. A few different issues that surface could be worked on within the coaching relationship for several weeks. Parents will be able to use this exercise to develop a united front and work together with compassion for one another and their children. It allows them to focus on parenting with purpose and on purpose.

Special attention should be given to the whole concept of spiritual leadership. How will the children be taught? What things are the parents deliberately incorporating into their family life that help the children learn about God and faith? During training the coaches will talk about how this was approached in their own families and those that are close to them. They will

¹⁸ Ron L Deal, *The Smart Step-Family : Seven Steps to a Healthy Family* (Bethany House Publishers: Bloomington, 2006), 51.

explore new ideas and they share together as the training progresses. They will ask these questions or use similar spiritual prompts during their time with the parents they are coaching; reminding the parents to seize teachable moments and look for God sightings as further opportunities to pass the legacy of faith.

Unit 4: Personality, Love Languages, Ages and Stages/Passages, Mile Markers

God created all people uniquely. Humanity is His masterpiece and is designed to work together as the body of Christ. All Christians have different levels of natural and spiritual gifts that are important to the effective functioning of the church. Understanding these special characteristics and propensities allows individuals and the community to develop and function with the greatest potential. In this unit the coach trainees begin to explore this in their own lives and families and learn to help others recognize how they are created and function. This allows people to appreciate their differences and in fact recognize the need for one another. Some of aspects of personality, motivation and growth are developmental and need to be nourished as the child grows. Coaches help parents recognize, embrace, and celebrate each of their children's mile markers of growth along the way to adulthood.

Personality and Learning Style

One of the most meaningful ways to help two people communicate better is to understand each person's personality/learning style. This will facilitate coaches' work with the parents and parents' work within their families. The scripture says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."¹⁹ This literally means to teach them according to their bent, the way God designed them personally. Each person is fearfully and wonderfully

¹⁹ Prov. 22:6.

made, unique and precious in His sight. It is therefore helpful for parents to get a grasp on the special characteristics of each member of their family.

The DISC profile is one of many useful assessment tools that can help guide family interactions as parents begin to understand their own personality traits as well as those of their spouses and children. A basic understanding of these components may help coaches work with parents and then in turn help parents with their family unit.

The DISC self-assessment is described as "... a quadrant behavioral model based on the work of Dr. William Moulton Marston (1893-1947) to examine the behavior of individuals in their environment or within a specific situation (otherwise known as environment). It therefore focuses on the styles and preferences of such behavior."²⁰ Significantly, the DISC Profile is a nonjudgmental tool used for understanding behavioral types and personality styles.

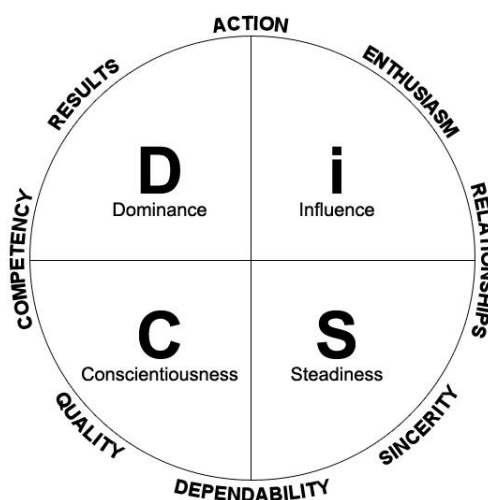


Figure 1: DISC personality groups.²¹

²⁰ "What is the DISC?" 123test, 2013. <http://www/123test.com/what-is-disc/> (accessed July 11, 2013).

²¹ Wiley. "Research Report for Adaptive Testing Assessment" *Everything DISC*. 2013. http://www.everythingdisc.com/UserFiles/Everything%20DiSC%20Research%20Report_AT_Wiley.pdf (accessed September 2014).

There are four main personality dimensions of traits within the DISC model. They are denoted by D for Dominance, I for Influence, S for Steadiness and C for Conscientiousness. Dominance (D) describes the way a person deals with problems, asserts himself, and controls any given situation. Influence (I) describes the way a person deals with other people and the way he or she communicates and relates to others. Steadiness (S) describes a person's temperament including patience, persistence and thoughtfulness. Conscientiousness (C) describes how a person approaches and organizes his or her activity, procedures and responsibilities.²²

Understanding the predominant general characteristics of each of these major personality groupings helps the coach interact with the coached parents and the parents, in turn, with their spouses and children. Those high in dominance "D" are to the point, decisive, and bottom-line oriented. People with strong dominance tend to be independent. They are often strong-willed people who enjoy challenges, taking action, and immediate results. Those with high influence "I" are optimistic and outgoing. People who thrive on influence tend to be highly social and gregarious. They prefer participating on teams, sharing thoughts, entertaining and energizing others. The highly Steadfast "S" people are empathetic and cooperative. People who score high on the steadiness scale tend to be team players and are supportive and helpful to others. They prefer being behind the scenes, working in consistent and predictable ways. They are often good listeners and tend to be uncomfortable with change. Those with high scores in Conscientiousness "C" can be described as concerned, cautious and correct. Strongly conscientious people are often focused on details and quality. They plan ahead, constantly check for accuracy, act

²² "What is the DISC?" 123test, 2013.<http://www/123test.com/what-is-disc/>(accessed July11,2013).

systematically, and want to know "how" and "why."²³ Life Coach Georgia Shaffer, M.A., made some observations about each of these personality types in regard to coaching. She noted the "D" personality is a natural leader who is intense and may be impatient. This person will work hard for the Coach they perceive is competent. The "I" personality may have difficulty breaking down problems into smaller chunks. They are extroverted (getting energy from being with others), and like attention. They seek and need approval. The "S" personality likes to mull over ideas and will respond well to being given questions to reflect on between sessions. They may neglect themselves to help others. The "C" personality fears failure and may be a disappointment to himself. It is best to give them one task at a time to focus on. Further, Ms. Shaffer says that as such, coaches tend to praise those qualities they have themselves. Coaches need to be careful not to discourage different personalities.²⁴ These are useful insights for the Parent Coaches.

As part of the coaches' preparation, it is helpful to read through these and try to see how one's disposition affects interaction. As part of the training at Rolling Hills, trainees use a free online DISC analysis is available at: <http://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test/index.php>. Coaches will complete and discuss this personality inventory and may suggest the parents they are working with do the same.

Love Languages²⁵

Another meaningful aspect of relationships for coaches and parents to understand is the dynamic of a predominant love language and how it can affect communication. Gary Chapman

²³ "DiSC", *Center For Internal Change, Inc.* 2012. http://www.internalchange.com/disc_classic_2_profile.asp (accessed September 2012).

²⁴ Georgia Shaffer, M.A. "Facilitating, Learning and Change: Advanced Coaching Skills, DVD Series 101, COCH 105." *Life Coaching Professional*. Forest: Light University, 2008.

²⁵ Gary Chapman coined this terminology for understanding the way in which we express and receive love.

has written several books on love languages as they apply to adults, teens, and children. Using them will help coaches relate to the parents and help them relate to each other and their children. In each of his books Gary Chapman identifies five key love languages and how they affect communication both generically and at different ages and stages. The Love Languages he identified are: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service and Physical Touch. The author provides a good summary outline of these basic Love Languages on the 5 Love Languages website. They include:

1) Words of Affirmation. These words encourage and lift up the receiver while negative words crush the person who has this love language.

2) Quality Time. A person with this love language really feels loved when they receive undivided attention; while postponements and cancellations can be wounding.

3) Receiving Gifts. Giving a gift that marks that the receiver was specifically and specially thought of make a person with this love language feel prized; while missing a gift giving occasion could be devastating.

4) Acts of Service. Doing something for a person with this love language really shows care; while laziness and broken promises do just the opposite.

5) Physical Touch. Being there with a person and touching when interacting shows a person with this primary love language love; while negligence can be destructive.²⁶

²⁶ Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages*. 08 09, 2007. <http://www.5lovelanguages.com/learn-the-languages/the-five-love-languages/> (accessed February 01, 2012).

When parents are having trouble understanding or communicating with their children or their spouse, the books that Dr. Chapman wrote on love languages would be excellent resources for coaches to use. These include: *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*²⁷, *The 5 Love Languages Singles Edition*²⁸, *The 5 Love Languages of Children*²⁹, and *The Five Love Languages of Teenagers*.³⁰ Chapman takes these basic concepts and helps parents understand how the love languages influence communication styles, affect expressions of love, and may play a role in other issues parents may be facing with their children or each other.

In training, coaching candidates assess their own love languages in order to more fully understand these concepts and discuss how they affect their relationships. They use the free quiz on the 5 Love Languages website.³¹ This tool is directed to specific populations and can be used in the coaching experience with parents and their children. Learning to love others in the language that speaks to them makes sense. Coaches may do a meaningful study with the parents they are working with using the appropriate love language book for the family.

Mile Markers and Passages

There are natural times during the development of each child when parents can celebrate a child's achievement and growth. Some of these can be done privately and others as part of the body of Christ. These Mile Markers were described in Chapter 4 and are reviewed with the coaches so that they may employ them with the parents they coach. Some Mile Markers that

²⁷ Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*. (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2010).

²⁸ Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages Singles Edition*. (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2014).

²⁹ Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages of Children*. (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2012).

³⁰ Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages of Teenagers*. (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2010).

³¹ <http://www.5lovelanguages.com/assessments/love/>

RHCC has identified are: Baby/Family Dedication, Affirming the School Aged Child, Baptism, Coming of Age (around 11-12 years old), Young Man/Womanhood (around the age of 16) and Launching in Adulthood (around the age of 18). Coaches can attend these events to personally support the coached family as well as help parents to get connected to this area of support and family celebration.

Unit 5: Giving the Blessing and Dedication

For parents, being able to pass the blessing to their children is vitally important in their relationships with the children and for the children's future well-being. As such, it is essential that Parent Coaches are trained in how to give blessings so that they can be incorporated into coaching sessions and taught to parents to incorporate in their family experience. In the bestselling book *The Blessing: Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance*, John Trent and Gary Smalley expound on this concept and say, "Gaining or missing out on parental approval has tremendous effect on us, even if it has been years since we have had contact with them. In fact, what happens in our relationship with our parents can greatly affect all our present and future relationships."³² Coaches need to understand this biblical concept and teach to the families in the church so that children will be less likely to feel constrained by unmet expectations in their families and thus freed to be all that God has called them to be.

John Trent and Gary Smalley suggest five vital factors to giving a blessing, each of which is significant.³³ The first is the use of meaningful and appropriate touch. Many psychologists would suggest that humans require touch from others to help them feel loved and accepted. Children, especially need physical closeness to grow emotionally. A blessing should include a

³² John Trent, PhD. and Gary Smalley, *The Blessing - Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011),17.

³³ Ibid. 45.

spoken message as blessings in scripture were not activated until they were spoken. For a child in search of the blessing, in many cases silence communicates a sense of confusion in the child. Authors John Trent and Gary Smalley point out that “Children who are left to fill in the blanks when it comes to what their parents think about them will often fail the test when it comes to feeling valuable and secure. Spoken or written words at least give the child an indication that he or she is worthy of some attention.”³⁴ Therefore, it is important that the children (and others present) hear the blessing of the parents (and/or other important adults). We can do this for others as well as our own children. The third factor that Smalley and Trent identify is that blessings should use a message to which the receiver will attach high value. Empty praise is not of permanent value because the subject will eventually question the comment and maybe its source. People need to feel valued, and they feel best when they believe that their loved ones value them highly. As such blessings should include genuine true praise.

Beyond this, the blessings should help the person being blessed by communicating a picture of a special future for him or her. Parents and/or significant adults should acknowledge the character and gifts of the child that will enable him to do that to which God has called him to. This is an essential part of the blessing affirmation and the structure on which a hopeful future can be built. Finally, a blessing should provide an active commitment. Those giving the blessing should promise they will help the child succeed and follow through as best as they are able.

The blessing is important to give and receive throughout our lives. It is the confirmation we receive from specific members of the body of Christ that God uses to encourage us.

Blessings can be given at many junctures in life and are especially meaningful as each Mile Marker is achieved.

³⁴ John Trent and Gary Smalley, “How to Bless Your Child – Part 1.” *Focus on the Family*. 2013 http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/spiritual_growth_for_kids/blessing-your-child/how-to-bless-your-child-part-1.aspx (accessed 2013).

Dedication of Coaches

As an affirmation from the church that each of the coaching candidates have completed the training and to commission them for this ministry Rolling Hills conducts a closing Dedication Service. The Dedication Service design begins with a time of Praise and Worship including many of the songs identified as especially meaningful during a time of trial in family life by each of the coaches. This is an exercise they did during training and that they can use in their own coaching tool box. The songs are followed by a modern parable calling each person to be the light of the world. Each coach then participates in sharing messages from the Word that bring promise and encouragement for service. The ceremony closes with prayer and anointing of each member who completed the training for ministry.

Reflection and Implementation

Personal invitations to be a part of this new Parent Coaching Team as part of Family Ministry were sent and a sample is in the Appendix. Soon, the first cohort of ten people went through the training in six sessions over the course of six weeks. Simultaneously, information was given out through the Family Ministry newsletter, email, and the Rolling Hills Worship Guide briefly describing Parent Coaching and its upcoming availability at RHCC. People who gave their contact information on the parent survey³⁵ and were interested in being coached were also notified about the commencement of this ministry.

As people began to request coaches they were sent a brief information card to complete so that these parents could be matched appropriately with their coaches. A copy is in the Appendix. Members of the RHCC Family Ministry met and prayed to assign the families

³⁵ Described in Chapter 3 and shown in Appendix A.

accordingly. When later requests came in they were matched by the Parent Coaching Coordinator who trained the coaches and knew of their family status and availability.

A second cohort of six coaches was trained in a weekend seminar format. While the weekend seminar was quicker there was less time to process the information and do the “homework”. Ideally, the week to week training sessions are preferred because of this integration factor and they more closely reflect the timeframe in which the relationship will develop between the coaches and the parents they coach; however, both set-ups covered the same material and have their relative benefits.

Not all the coaches were able to immediately begin coaching because either coaches were not requested or their own personal life situations required a delay. Training is currently offered once a year with hopes that this number will increase as the Coaching Ministry demands increase. It is timely and especially applicable to the needs of the young families at RHCC. This is exciting!

CHAPTER SIX

INITIAL RESULTS, CONCERNS, AND CONCLUSION

Establishing a ministry focus in the local church to help parents to become the spiritual leaders in their families can be difficult, but exciting. Rolling Hills Community Church is taking concrete steps to do just that. The unique concept of combining Family Mile Markers with lay Parent Coaching and solid biblical teaching is promising. This involves both adult and child education on Sunday mornings and other times throughout the week. There has been a curriculum change to address the supportive role of the church in enabling parents to be the primary spiritual teachers of their children and a restructuring of the church staff to include a Children and Family Minister who functions as the leader of the Family Ministries team. Many fun family activities such as a game night, inflatable fun, and others have been incorporated into the church events calendar. The initial results of this project are very encouraging.

Evaluation was made by interviewing the staff associated with the project, the coaches, and the parents who received coaching. Each group responded to their part of the project giving personal anecdotes, answering questions related to their perception of the project and how it worked. The coaches and coached parents were asked what seemed most meaningful to them and what areas could be improved or discarded. They were asked if they would be willing to share their coaching story for a promotional piece and ideas that they may have to spread the ministry.

The Family Ministry staff is working to meet the demands of this growing congregation and is excited to see these various aspects of the ministry come to life. In regards to the Mile Markers, RHCC already have had fruitful results. Numerous members of the staff have been involved in putting together the various programs and celebrations. Our Preschool Minister and

Lead Pastor with the support of other lay leaders and interns have put together an excellent Family Dedication program (Mile Marker 1) and RHCC hold these celebrations several times a year. This has been in place for some time and only refined slightly over the last few years. These anticipated events are announced at the “Here and Nearly Here” gatherings for expectant and new parents and in the RHCC worship guide as well as in the Family Newsletter. Parents are encouraged to dedicate their children to the Lord in this ceremony in which the family and friends are invited to witness and celebrate. Through the required Family Dedication Class, parents learn what the Bible says about being a Christian parent and how to become the primary faith teachers for their children. Parents are given an opportunity in advance in which they select a life-verse or passage that they will pray over their child and instill in them as they grow. They will share their child’s (children’s) full name and its meaning or reason it was chosen. A Rolling Hills parent wrote a prayer seeking blessing for each part of the child’s body and how it will be used for God that is now incorporated in all RHCC dedication. RHCC pastors lead the dedication of each of the children sharing the special information about each child as he or she is presented to the body and to the Lord. He also leads the parents and gathered supporters in a prayer of dedication, as the precedent in scripture dictates¹, in which the parents accept responsibility for guiding their child to Christ. The church body commits to partnering with these parents in guiding the development of the child’s faith. It is a beautiful and meaningful church ceremony followed by a reception and fellowship time.

When children enter their formal education parents begin to anticipate a new level of development. As their children step-up to Kindergarten families gather for a party to commemorate this time. This is an exciting period for parents as they realize the growth of their

¹ Jesus presented in temple – Luke 2:22 and Jesus blessing the children – Luke 18:15-16

child from a baby, to a toddler, to a more independent little person. Their child is ready to spend some time apart from their parents and begin to more formally learn from others. At this juncture RHCC shares with parents a handbook entitled *Kindergarten kids@rh* in which the kids' ministry strategy is reviewed. The commitment to partner with the parents to whom God blessed with these children is reiterated. Important information about curriculum, Sunday worship/learning time, ideas and tools for study time at home, and Wednesday night programming and Family Worship nights are discussed and are included in this booklet which families can take home or access online. This short handbook also delineates a developmental check list, the plan for the year end celebration, recommended books, ideas about praying with their children and devotionals. All the mile markers are highlighted and contact information is given for the Family Ministry Team. Families are soon off to a positive start with their children's education in connection with the church.

The Rolling Hills Community Church has had occasion for two Kindergarten graduations, which constitute the completion of the journey to Mile Marker 2- Entering Formal Education. Families and friends gather in the Main Street which is the large children's open classroom to celebrate this milestone in the life of their children. RHCC teachers are introduced and share in this special event. This party commences with each student's name being read and special scripture being shared as they are presented with an easy to read full Bible from the Pastor on behalf of the church. These become the uniform texts for the next several years of church education. Also, at this time the basic concept of the Mile Marker progression is shared again and Parent Coaching is offered. Many parents have expressed appreciation for highlighting key points of spiritual development as a church and giving them a framework for leading their children in the faith.

Mile Marker 3 – Salvation/Baptism is celebrated monthly at RHCC. Baptism is central to the Christian faith and has been a part of RHCC since its inception ten years ago. RHCC now has so many coming to the Lord that the church films them live from the gallery, where our baptismal pool is located, and is able to watch the baptisms on the big screens within the worship area. A brief testimony is shared as they enter the water. A new dimension of this testimony sharing has recently been added by having some of the people who are making a profession of faith tell their story ahead of their baptism in an interview setting for a video feed. This then is shared at the time of their Baptism. The testimonies are such a great blessing and encouragement to the congregation.

Once a person has asked to be baptized RHCC requires that he participate in a Baptism/Belief Class to be sure he understands what it means and what is entailed in the process. These classes are age group specific for children, youth and adults. The RHCC Children and Family Pastor has developed a wonderful program for parents and their children who are exploring Baptism. The class involves a time of fun interaction and sharing with a word match game that helps everyone understand the terminology commonly used in baptism. The baptism candidates can tell their story and receive the tools to create their own spiritual milestone keepsake box. In the keepsake box they can collect the story of their salvation, written in their own hand with a picture of their Baptism. They can add their certificate and other key mementos of their spiritual journey. Both parents and children are given information to help them understand the testimony they are about to make. This then truly becomes a marker that the individual can return to and remember God's faithfulness. These are included in the Appendix.

RHCC encourages those who are being baptized to have a significant Christian person in their journey perform the actual baptism. Often this is a parent, mentor or youth minister. How

very meaningful this is for all involved. The cheer that inevitably erupts from the gathered crowd is heavenly.

Mile Marker 4: Coming of Age has been celebrated by a few individual families within the church and will predominately be a more private celebration rather than a church wide event. These families have read books and incorporated ideas from them and other people they know who have celebrated this milestone. They have included mentors and family members into a day-long or weekend journey that culminates with a celebration. Every family that has recognized this milestone has deliberately chosen to sow seeds of truth into their child and affirm their character. The child, the parents, and the mentors all have reported the blessing of participating in the process over a period of a year or more and in this event. Resources are made available for parents online so that they may customize this milestone for their child and family situation. RHCC is also focusing on a three year preteen or middle school discipleship program in the Sunday morning setting in which the teachers partner with parents as their children transition from childhood to young adults. RHCC does not have many in this age group at this time, but in a few years this will have a far more significant impact because there are so many young families in RHCC. A church celebration will give families and kids a moment to commemorate this experience together.

Like the previous marker; Mile Marker #5: Manhood/Womanhood is a significant passage that will predominately be celebrated by individual families. Acknowledging and celebrating this event is important in recognizing and rewarding growth with privileges and responsibilities as well as encouraging good family communication. Both parents and children can benefit from formally acknowledging and discussing what 'growing up' in the faith looks like within their family and how it can be honored by all involved. Children often learn to drive

and become more independent from their parents at this time. Unwittingly, many parents fail to bless or acknowledge their child's growth and an artificial division between the generations is formed. Anticipating this milestone allows parents to begin to release their children and trust the teaching they have received, the character they have developed, and the God who guides them. Parents learn to be people of influence, not just law. They can help their children choose Godly mentors who will also be there as sounding boards and support. Children learn to take the responsibility that goes with privilege and to show honor and respect. These concepts are shared with parents as well as ideas and outlines for creating a special manhood/womanhood event to make this Mile Marker a significant step in the spiritual development of their son or daughter. Some of the Parent Coaches have been involved in such events and have testified how much it meant to them and the young people involved.

The final Mile Marker #6 – High School Graduation has been celebrated twice since RHCC formally embraced this milestone. Both classes have been extremely small, but again it is understood that this is temporary and as the congregation continues to grow so will this celebration. Parents begin to prepare for this milestone as their children enter the last few years of high school. They have the difficult task of preparing their child to leave the comfort of home and face the challenges of the world. This preparation involves practical and spiritual skill for both the parent and the child. The child, as a young adult, learns to trust God more fully for their spiritual growth and ensuing independence from home-life. They enjoy mentors and friends and begin to use their gifts and talents in the church and associated activities in the community. This marker helps equip parents to take advantage of the few years their kids are still at home and help mold them into faithful followers of Christ.

At RHCC a celebration dinner is held in honor of the graduates and family and mentors are invited to attend. Parents affirmed the very things mention above; calling out the character strengths of their graduate and picturing a special future for them. They write and speak a blessing over their child. Other family members and mentors are also able to talk privately with the graduate to affirm him and pray for him. Pictures are shared and special gifts given to mark the celebration. There are smiles and tears, pride and partings, blessing and hope. Many parents and their students have said this time of graduation blessing was one they would always remember. How wonderful that each family is able to celebrate more than an academic achievement, but the emergence of a fine Christian young adult. This is what is eternal.

Overall, the response to these Mile Markers has been very positive. The Mile Markers that were designated to be celebrated independently by the families are harder to gage, yet still seem to be of significant value. The RHCC Family Ministry team desires to continue helping parents through these stages of their child's development. Also, because RHCC has much fewer teenagers than preschool and primary school aged children there was not a large population from which to review relative success. RHCC desires to continue pursuing these Family Life Mile Markers so that the young people who have reached those Mile Markers can both celebrate and receive the blessings. These six Mile Markers will continue to be refined for the upcoming children.

Parent Coaching, though getting a slow start, has been most encouraging. It took a considerable amount of time to put together training materials that would be practical, but not overwhelming. A much more extensive training both in scope and depth was not feasible at this time, but may be an option for advanced training in the future. As the Parent Coach Coordinator conducted the training on two different occasions she and the RHCC Family Ministry team was

able to establish the training handbook as a reliable guide and baseline. Individual coach trainees responded and interacted as the material sparked questions, thoughts and conversation and thus each session was unique. This dynamic aspect of the training keeps it fresh and the pertinent to those preparing to be coaches.

Each of the coaches participated fully in the training asking questions, practicing with role play, and working through the “homework” that they may later chose to use with their coached parents. These sessions were very meaningful and different aspects really spoke to different coaches. The trainer’s personal observation was that the topics allow for great discussion and camaraderie among the group. It was felt that keeping each training cadre to twelve or so will maintain this positive aspect. Many of the coaches shared that they were blessed personally by the discussion and homework. They were looking forward to sharing with others and employing some of these ideas with those they coach. Many initially expressed concern about getting the relationship with the parents they are coaching started and were grateful for the concrete direction in the training as well skill development in communication and conflict resolution. They also enjoyed and felt it was beneficial to get together after the training to review and process how it is going with actual coached parents. The new coaches made suggestions for the program and shared what God is doing through their experiences. Several participated in the promotional video.

The key point in the training was to allow God to use the life experiences of the coaches and their relationship with Him to guide the time they shared with the parents they were matched with. Prayer was to undergird all they did. The primary purposes of the training were to be sure all coaches had the same basic skills training, knew how and when to seek support, and to give a venue for connecting older more mature Christian parents with younger or newer parents. The

relationship would flourish as God moved through them. Indeed this is what unfolded. The RHCC Family Ministry team suggested that the coach's start with six or eight meetings with their matched parents and most met 2-4 times a month. All of the coaches, who had been matched, reported having positive experiences.

One of the difficulties encountered was that not as many young parents took advantage of this ministry as had indicated interest. The RHCC Family Ministry team actually had several coaches ready to go and no one apparent to match them with. Slowly most of the trained coaches have been matched through pastoral referrals and individuals requesting coaches through the Family Ministries. This 'small beginning' generated much enthusiastic discussion as the team and coaches gathered to review their experiences. All wanted to do more or do it again. Some were continuing their relationships and didn't really anticipate any ending date. Another factor was that the Family Ministry Team struggled with finding a significant number of older parents to serve in the capacity of coaches primarily due to the fact that because they comprise a much smaller portion of the congregation. Many more seasoned adults were already serving in other areas. This is a dynamic of this particular congregation and probably will not be as significant for other churches. In fact, the reverse may be true in some churches with fewer young families involved. The significant matter remains that the church needs to equip and minister to as many as possible. RHCC's older adult population is also growing and this may not be as big a concern in future years.

Another concern was that geographically some of the matches lived about 40 minutes apart; both living about 20 minutes from the church building in different directions. When RHCC has a larger pool they may be able to reduce this some. The primary concern remains to match families that have some structural similarities. Both the coaches and the coached parents

said they appreciated their relationship so much that they would not let this distance become a stumbling block. Some coaches reported that when the families got together, the older children of the coaches enjoyed their time with the younger children of the parents receiving coaching. It became a very much a mutual relationship all around.

The question about how to get more people involved generated several new ideas. RHCC has posted testimonials in the newsletter form both coaches and matched parents. This was well received and did generate a few more matches. However, it was felt that this was not enough. The next logical step along these lines was to create a video promotional that could be played before worship, during our church news segment and at other key family gathering events. Some written testimonials are included in the Appendix and the promotional video can be accessed at: <http://vimeo.com/rhcc/parentcoaching>.

Other ideas included creating a card or magnet invitation to Coaching that could be given out in the Nursery and at other church outlets such as the *Mom to Mom* program, the *Here and Nearly Here* gathering, and Family Dedication. Another suggestion was to do an overview of Parent Coaching for our small group leaders annually so that they would be able to support and point group member to the Parent Coaching process. It was also felt that Mother's Day and/or Father's Day may be good times to promote the ministry from "the pulpit" and have sign-ups available in the gallery. All of these ideas are feasible and several will be implemented within the coming months.

The coaches' response to their training was also encouraging. They liked both the length and the breadth of the material that was covered. The elements that were most meaningful to them included identifying a song that represented a challenging time in their family life and sharing it as a prayer and reminder of God's faithfulness. Also, delving into their respective

family history and looking for patterns and expectations in family life, as well as studying the Love Languages were perceived as meaningful and helpful. The coaches recommended possibly adding a segment on love and respect in the family based on the work of Emerson Eggerich as developed in his book and seminars entitled: *Love and Respect*. We have offered this training at our church and could easily add a reference point in the training program.

Another good suggestion was to create a resource guide of books, blogs, etc. on specific topics that may come up during the Parent Coaching experience. These include: adoption both domestic and international and concerns related to adopting older children; family dynamics and the special needs child, step-families, and teaching our children about sexuality. This is already under way and we are hoping to have copies of each of the recommended books in the church library.

This project, aimed at helping parents become the primary spiritual leaders in their families, generated a renewed awareness of the importance of the ministry of the body of Christ to their fellow believers. This unique combination of Mile Markers and Parent Coaching could easily be brought to other churches and implemented to support and encourage Christian parents who are seeking to truly follow the Lord as they raise their children. It is hoped that it will also raise the awareness of the Godly design and real need for parents to step up and deliberately guide their children to faith and participation in the church. Christian children and youth church programming can be wonderful but, as statistics reveal, often not enough. If we want our young people to reverse the trend of leaving the church fellowship and practice of their faith, parents need to be spiritual leaders in their families. Clearly this involves diligence on the part of the church to equip parents. This new paradigm shows that through a cohesive family focused ministry, educational programs can be offered at the various ages and stages, highlighting

spiritual mile markers and combining it with a dynamic interaction of intergenerational discipleship for parents, can make a real difference for Christian families. Each part of the body has a role in raising disciples and supporting God's work here on earth. This is good news!

The synergy between family and church can bring new vitality into passing the Christian faith effectively on to succeeding generations in almost any congregation. It necessarily will need to be adapted to the local demographics and societal structure. Much as RHCC would benefit by expanding its senior population to meet intergenerational needs, other congregations may need to reach out to younger families. This is more likely the case as many traditional churches have a preponderance of older members. With the clear vision the Mile Markers give for spiritual development in families and the Parent Coach training for the more seasoned members this gap can be bridged. The Parent Coaching ministry gives an essential conduit to connect families for support and growth. This deliberate collaboration between Christian families and the body of Christ will help ensure a legacy of faith for generations to come.

APPENDIX A

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IN THE FAMILY SURVEY

Thank you for participating in our Spiritual Leadership in the Family Survey. We are conducting this survey in conjunction with Rolling Hills Community Church partner Cindy Hayes' Doctor Ministry Dissertation Project. We hope to determine how we are doing in our family ministry and to provide training and support for families as they seek to pass the legacy of Christian faith to the next generation.

Demographics – This first section of questions simply covers demographics that will help us to analyze the rest of the information in this survey.

Age group: Under 25, 25--35, 35-45, 45-55, over 55

Gender: Male Female

Marital status: Single, Married, Divorced

Children's age groups: 0-5, 6-11, 12-18. (Check all that apply.)

I am parenting alone. (Y/N)

I am a parent in a step-family. (Y/N)

One or more of my children is adopted. (Y/N)

I regularly attend worship (Y/N) Number of years? _____

I am a partner with Rolling Hills Community Church (Y/N) Number of years? _____

Comments: _____

Personal – This set of question helps us to understand your current spiritual development. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: 1 = not at all; 2 = not much; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = strongly agree; and 5 = totally agree.

I am satisfied with my current spiritual state. (1-5)

I am confident in my/our spiritual leadership in our family. (1-5)

I have a meaningful relationship with God. (1-5)

I am growing in my faith. (1-5)

I spend time regularly reading and studying the Bible. (1-5)

I spend time regularly in prayer. (1-5)

I spend time regularly in service. (1-5)

I spend time regularly in worship. (1-5)

I am comfortable with my level of giving financially to the church. (1-5)

I have a Christian support group. (1-5)

I love my spouse, and he/she knows it. (1-5, NA)

I work well with my spouse in family issues. (1-5, NA)

Comments: _____

Children – This section of questions pertains to your children, your thoughts and feelings about raising them, and your relationship with them. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: 1 = not at all; 2 = not much; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = strongly agree; and 5 = totally agree. For the last two questions, please simply answer yes or no.

How many children do you have? _____

I feel comfortable sharing my faith with my family. (1-5)

I have a meaningful relationship with each of my children. (1-5)

I would like to grow closer to my children. (1-5)

I have enough time with each of my children. (1-5)

I know what to expect in each stage of my child's development. (1-5)

I am ready to usher my child into the next stage of growth and development. (1-5)

I am confident about addressing the future spiritual and developmental stages of my children. (1-5)

I feel support from my local church community to raise my children for God. (1-5)

I believe that it is ultimately my responsibility to teach my children about God and lead them to a relationship with Him. (1-5)

I would like more information on how to talk with my children about faith and God on a regular basis.

(Y/N)

I would like to learn how to celebrate spiritual markers in my family. (Y/N)

Comments_

Family – We would now like to ask some questions about your family as a whole. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: 1 = not at all; 2 = not much; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = strongly agree; and 5 = totally agree.

I would like more fellowship with Christian families in our same stage of life. (1-5)

I would benefit from coaching from seasoned Christian parents. (1-5)

I spend time regularly in service with my family. (1-5)

Comments: _____

My Family and the Church – This last set of survey questions gathers information about how you and your family interact with your church. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: 1 = not at all; 2 = not much; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = strongly agree; and 5 = totally agree.

Faith training in our home is enhanced by our church community and its education program. (1-5)

I know the names of my children's teachers or small group leaders and recognize them. (1-5)

I regularly use the interactive material my children bring home from church. (1-5)

As a result of training and support from my church, I am a better parent. (1-5)

As a result of training and support from my church, I am a better spiritual leader for my family. (1-5)

Comments __

Identifying Information/Request for Contact – Thank you so much for taking part in this survey! On this last page, you have the option of requesting more information or adding your name for additional support. All of these questions are completely optional. If you would like to skip them, please scroll to the bottom and click submit.

I would like to be involved in learning about Spiritual Markers and Celebrations for my family. (Y/N)

I am interested in receiving coaching for the specific circumstances in the spiritual life of my family. (Y/N)

I would like to help teach or coach parents in the Christian community. (Y/N)

I would like more information about serving in a teaching role in preschool, children's, or youth programming. (Y/N)

Additional comments: ____

Name: ____

Address: ____

Email: ____

Phone: ____

APPENDIX B

INVITATION TO COACHING MINISTRY

[Church Letter Head]

May 8, 2012

Dear _____,

In December, you completed a Spiritual Leadership Survey for the Rolling Hills Family Life Team. In your response, you indicated that you would be interested in receiving coaching through specific circumstances in the spiritual life of your family. We are reaching out to you because we now have a team of seasoned Christian parents who completed our training course for Parent Coaching and are now ready to serve. These coaches are not experts; they are parents just like you who are ready to walk with you through life for a time. We'd love to help get you connected, and we are excited about this opportunity for you and your coach(es) to share with one another in the body of Christ.

Enclosed you will find a response card. Please fill it out completely so that we can prayerfully connect you with the coaches that could best match your interest and needs. Please return it in the enclosed envelope by Wednesday, May 16th. Your coach will contact you directly by the end of May to set a meeting time. Most coaching goes for 6 to 8 sessions and you can negotiate more or less depending on your needs.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any of us. We would be happy to tell you more about the program and what its role can be in your family's life.

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

In His Service,

Nic Allen
nic@rollinghillscommunity.org
Family/Children's Pastor

Sara Ingmire
sara@rollinghillscommunity.org
Preschool Minister

Cindy Hayes
hayes4him@gmail.com
Parent/Coach/Coordinator

APPENDIX C

PARENT COACHING INTEREST FORM

Name(s): _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Are you still interested in participating in the Rolling Hills Parent Coaching Program?

- Yes, we are still interested in parent coaching. Please match us up with parent coaches at this time.
- Yes, we are still interested, but we can't commit at this time. Please touch base with us in the fall.
- No, we are no longer interested in Parent Coaching.

Children:

Name	Gender	Age	Special needs or concerns

Any additional information you would like to provide that would help match you with a coach.

Please return by Wednesday, May 16th. Thank you!

APPENDIX D
COACHES INVITATION

Dear _____,

I am excited about inviting you to participate in our Parent Coaching program. As part of our Family Ministry at Rolling Hills, we are hoping to come alongside parents who would like support in their stage of parenting and family life. We are developing the program to guide parents through short seasons through which they feel they need guidance. We would love to have you as part of our team. You specifically have been recommended because of your Christian walk and your experience as a _____ (choice from list below).

A couple who has navigated those years

An individual who has navigated those years

A single parent

An adoptive parent

A divorced parent

A parent in a blended family

A parent of a special needs child

A homeschool parent

The Family Ministry team will be conducting training for parent coaches during Wednesday night programming from 6:00-7:30pm on March 21st through April 25th. These five sessions will train coaches on what it means to be a coach and how to coach parents through different types of life circumstances. We will give you some specific tools to use including knowledge about ages and stages of family development, spiritual markers, guiding parents in

sharing their faith, family communication skills, and family blessings. Additional training will be made available later, as needed, for specific areas of ministry.

After completing training, coaches will be paired with parents who have requested to take part in the program. You will be able to meet with them during the our regular Wednesday night programming or at some other mutually agreed on time. We anticipate 2 - 6 “formal” meetings as together you decide, and are lead through the Holy Spirit, how to best work through the issue that set of parents is facing.

We are excited to follow the Titus 2 directive to share with newer parents what we have learned in our Christian walk and to encourage them on their own journeys. I hope that you will prayerfully consider this opportunity and, should God lead, take part in this developing ministry. I look forward to hearing from you and registering you for our training. Feel free to contact me to sign up or ask questions. You are in my prayers.

In Him,

Cindy Hayes with the Rolling Hills Family Ministry Team

Cindy's Cell: 615 xxx 2149

APPENDIX E

ROLLING HILLS MINISTRY MILE MARKERS

Mile Marker 1: Family Dedication

The first spiritual mile marker parents and children encounter is Family Dedication. Through the required Family Dedication class, parents learn what the Bible says about being a Christian parent and how to become the primary faith teachers for their children. Parents are given an opportunity to select a life-verse or passage that they will pray over their child and instill in them as they grow. During the Family Dedication Ceremony, parents accept the responsibility for guiding their child to Christ, and the church body commits to partnering with parents in guiding the development of the child's faith.

Mile Marker 2: Formal Education

This spiritual mile marker takes place throughout the kindergarten year with both a home and church component. At home, parents spend this year fostering a love for God's word by teaching their children daily practices of prayer and studying God's word. The church will provide resources to help parents engage their child at this new stage of spiritual development. At church, we will celebrate the end of this milestone year with a first Bible celebration, at which time children will be presented with a complete Bible of their own. During the ceremony, parents will also pass a blessing to their child as he or she celebrates this spiritual marker.

Mile Marker 3: Salvation and Baptism

As a part of their ministry environments at Rolling Hills, kids are repeatedly presented with the truths that God made them, loves them, and desires to be in a relationship with them through His son Jesus. The understanding of the gospel message is at the core of what we do in Family Ministry. The church partners with parents to lead children toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Then, we celebrate their spiritual birthday with baptism. Kids who voice their trust in Jesus for salvation or who have expressed a strong desire to become a Christian attend our Baptism and Belief class with their parents (offered multiple times throughout the year). The class confirms a child's understanding of following Christ and prepares them for baptism.

Mile Marker 4: Coming of Age:

Adolescence is an important marker in the lives of children. It is important that they are prepared both spiritually and emotionally before they enter this stage of development. In order to help facilitate that within our Sunday morning teaching settings, children entering the fifth grade move into a two-year world of preteen discipleship. During the two years of fifth and sixth grade, this Sunday morning environment prepares a child for the journey through the teenage years and partners with parents to help a child transition from childhood. The church provides resources that parents can use to create a special celebration for the family as the child comes of age. In the church setting, we host a celebration at the close of the child's second year in the preteen class to give

families and kids a moment to commemorate the experience together.

Mile Marker 5: Manhood/Womanhood

The passing of a child into adulthood is a significant process. Biblically we must equip our children to become men and women of God. In our culture, age sixteen is the year teens experience new freedoms. Even though we try to delay our children from growing up, inevitably they do, and it happens faster than we would like. Students need to see the importance of their role and responsibility in the Body of Christ, take on the characteristics of Christ, share Christ with their friends, and develop spiritual disciplines. We partner with parents in the journey of leading a freshman or sophomore to become a man or woman of God and equip parents to be their child's spiritual leader as they make the leap to adulthood. The church provides parents ideas for creating a special manhood/womanhood event to mark this significant step in the spiritual development of their son or daughter.

Mile Marker 6: Graduation

Graduation is on the horizon for your 16 through 18-year-old child. Parents have the difficult task of preparing a child to leave the comfort of home and face the challenges of the world. This preparation takes practical and spiritual skills that involve applying biblical principles, determining the will of God, making wise decisions, owning and sharing their faith, defending their faith, giving well, and even the future possibility of marriage and family. The resources that the church provides at this marker equip parents to take advantage of the few years kids are still at home to mold them into faithful followers of Christ. At the end of high school, the church hosts a graduation celebration that marks a meaningful and memorable end to this time.

Spiritual Milestones and Markers

In our culture young people often drift into their adult years without ever marking the transition or receiving specific spiritual guidance from parents and mentors. Grounding our children in the Word and calling them to live in its truth is essential for their wellbeing. If you are being intentional with them, marking transitions from one passage of life to another can be both affirming and strengthening. As a church we would like to encourage and support parents as they seek to do this.

We have identified the **Coming of Age Milestone** and the **Manhood/Womanhood Milestone** as Spiritual Markers and celebration points for parents and their children.

The Coming of Age Milestone/Spiritual Marker would be celebrated sometime between the ages of 11 and 13 as (or just before) your child reaches puberty. Often this includes some preparatory discussions about their changing bodies, hormones, and purity. These discussions are best had before your child faces the issues that surround their "growing-up" experience. God's word should be intricately woven into this process. The ability to reproduce physically marks the difference between a child and adult. Though

there will be much more maturity to be acquired over the coming years, parents will want to recognize this significant change in their child. This milestone is marked in many other cultures the much like the bar mitzvah for young men and the bat mitzvah for young women is celebrated in the Jewish faith. It entails education, affirmation and ceremony. The family and significant others gather to recognize this development into adulthood and to offer blessing.

Several good books are available to guide parents through this process. They include: Rite of Passage by Jim McBride, Raising a Modern Day Knight by Robert Lewis, and Raising a Modern Day Princess by Farrel and Hanna.

Book Overview from Amazon:

Rite of Passage-A Father's Blessing Publication Date: **July 6, 2011**

For generations, other religions and cultures have put their children through a rite of passage to adulthood. Many people are aware of the Jewish practice of the Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, for example. The reality, however, is that many children today don't learn how to become adults on purpose; rather, they ride the wave of adolescence toward an unknown adult future. Moms, dads, and other perfectly placed adults have the unique opportunity to guide the teenagers in their life toward adulthood. This is not a privilege to be taken lightly, but neither is it an impossible task. Jim McBride, executive producer of Fireproof and Courageous brings wisdom, experience, and practical examples to his guidebook for leading those burgeoning adults in your life through a real-life Rite of Passage.

Raising a Modern Day Knight Publication Date: **January 17, 2007**

What does it mean to be a man? Moreover, how does a father instill these qualities in his son? Using as an example the process by which a boy moved through the medieval stages of knighthood, Robert Lewis identifies parallel stages for today's fathers to create ceremonies to commemorate significant milestones in a young man's journey toward becoming a modern-day knight. Beginning with a biblical perspective of manhood, Robert Lewis shares a unique approach to shaping a boy into a man by equipping him with three essential elements: a vision, a code of conduct, and a cause (Christianity) in which to invest his life. Complete with ceremony ideas to celebrate accomplishments and ingrain them in his mind, this softcover is as insightful as it is practical in raising a boy to be a chivalrous, godly man.

Raising A Modern Day Princess Publication Date: **December 17, 2009**

In the same tradition as *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, this book is designed to equip parents to cultivate strong relationships with their adolescents. *Raising a Modern-Day Princess* stresses the importance of creating a rite of passage for teen girls—a defining moment in which girls can be blessed by significant adults in their lives, and a call for their families and communities to celebrate and support them as they enter womanhood. This book offers practical help in raising a generation of women to see themselves as God sees them—as daughters of the King.

These authors emphasize that there are several important touch points in a child's development that can be celebrated through a Spiritual Marker event.

Our next marker is the Manhood/Womanhood Milestone which can be celebrated between the ages of 15-17 as your child begins to be more independent and assumes more responsibility as a maturing adult. This usually coincides with what was once referred to for the girls as the "Sweet Sixteen" or "Coming-out" party or when they receive their driver's license. In this ceremony a parent would bless his/her child by affirming their adulthood, recognizing their special gifts and abilities, picturing a special future for them, and perhaps having others join them in sharing both words of wisdom and affirmation. This is often done in a special extended event (a hike, weekend away, mission trip, or other significant adventure) followed by a family gathering and ceremony. Gifts can be given to signify the blessing and remind them of both yours and God's love.

Some Key Points:

- 1) It is important that our children hear from their Christian parents about the various aspects of growing up and are recognized and affirmed by them.
- 2) This event should be something special - out of the ordinary and culminating with a fellowship time or dinner. Ideas include: a scavenger hunt (finding clues that lead to the next person), a camping trip, a girl's weekend, fancy date night with Dad...
- 3) One important thing that parents can do is invite other like-minded adults into the lives of their children to become mentors and a support for their children. There is wisdom in the counsel of the Godly. These people then will add to your influence on your growing child. They can be invited to participate in the blessing ceremony for your child.

4) Some topics that might be include are:
Faith, hope, love, purity, integrity, family and purpose. Different people could address these with your child throughout the year or during the event.

5) Jim McBride points out the special gifts given at this time (rite of passage or milestone/spiritual marker) "should be things they hold on to, cherish, and remember...they are visual reminders of the commitments they make and the love shown by family and mentors." (Rite of Passage, p127-8.)

6) Verbal Blessing is important especially as it is given publically. This should include:

Meaningful Touch: A kiss or a hug of laying on of hands. (This demonstrates warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation.)
Give Verbal Acknowledgement. "The tongue has the power of life and death: (Proverbs 18:21). A blessing imparts life and hope for the future. What will you say?

Attaching High Value, connecting his/her character to a word picture.

Use word pictures, as Jesus did in his parables to help bring understanding. Match the positive attributes of something commonly seen or understood to those you see in your young adult.

Your ideas:

Picturing his/her potential future. What do you see him or her becoming?

Choose a scripture that you believe is applicable for his or her life.

(Adapted from *The Gift of the Blessing*, by Smalley and Trent)

Please let us know how we can help you mark the growth and development of your child into a Christian adult. We'd love to share more specifics as you pass the legacy of faith in your family.

Contact Information:

Nic Allen

APPENDIX F

PARENT COACH TRAINING NOTES

Leader Guide

Cindy Hayes, MA, Doctor of Ministry Candidate – Certified Life Coach

Session One

Overview – why you are here?

Everyone can benefit from a coach. This is evident in sports and music training, but is really true in every aspect of life. The scriptures remind us in Titus 2 that the (older) more experienced Christians need to pass their knowledge and commitment to family life on to the next generation. That is a coaching directive.

You have been identified as someone of Christian character who could walk alongside a younger parent and make a difference. You are someone who knows the “game” and is willing to encourage, teach, and hold others accountable to follow Christ in all they do, especially as it applies to family life. As parent coaches, we will lend our experience, compassion, and prayers to help others strengthen their family dynamic and walk closely with God. He has a design for you and doesn’t waste any of your life experience, both good and difficult. He redeems our lives that we might be a testimony to Him as we serve others. That is what parent coaching is about. Many parents are excited about raising their kids, but also unsure of themselves. They may have difficult situations, or difficult children. They may be overwhelmed or just looking for encouragement. They just may be seeking to do the best they can and realize that the church can support them. God can use you.

Key Concepts about Coaching

- 1) As coaches, we need to know who we are and be able to articulate what we believe.
 - It is critical that families know up front that you are coming from a Christian worldview. This worldview includes:
 - an understanding of the concept that God is the creator of all and is active in history – past, present and future.
 - He came to set us free from sin and to enjoy His presence forever(the Gospel message) , and

- He designed the family and the church to pass the faith on to the next generation.
 - You are not an expert, but a fellow sojourner who has walked this section of the path of life before.
 - You will not “solve their problems,” but connect them to the One who will see them through.
- 2) A Coach is not a Counselor. We do not help parents resolve complex problems from their past. Those kinds of issues (i.e. abuse, neglect, etc.) should be referred back to the church staff.
- Coaches “work” in the present and are forward-looking. Coaches come alongside parents to help them make the changes they want.
 - Coaches provide accountability, comfort, wisdom, and encouragement as a family moves towards its goals.
 - Coaches may share from their personal experience (this is their living testimony), but the focus always must remain on the parents they are working with – not themselves. Direct advice is limited, but ideas are shared. Coaches try to draw the “plan” from the parents and not create one for the parents they are working with.
 - Coaches rely heavily on God through prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit when they interact with those they are coaching. This takes the pressure off. We don’t work in our own power, but His.
 - Confidentiality is essential. Coaches will not share information without the parents’ request unless they are made aware of a potentially dangerous situation.
- 3) Coaching as a Couple – for those of you who are doing coaching together.
- This is ideal when both parents are together in seeking support; however, it can sometimes be a tricky situation to navigate.
 - Generally, husbands will address husband/father concerns, and wives address wife/mother concerns. Sometimes coaches will need to represent the spouse’s perspective.
 - Coaches need to be sensitive to one another and yielding both to each other and the Holy Spirit so that no conflict arises between them as they try to “help” another couple.
 - The coaches’ relationship will model much to the parent couple they are meeting with. Surround all with prayer.
 - Debrief with each other as coaches at the close of each session.

- 4) Every coaching session should be preceded by prayer and included in each session as appropriate.
- 5) Every family is different so there is no formula for your sessions; however there are some key elements you'll want to incorporate in your time together to keep it productive. We will talk about those throughout this course.

Getting Started – The Opening Sessions

The first session will involve getting to know each other. You will tell briefly about yourselves.

This will often explain how you were paired together (i.e. single parent with single parent).

Then, give parents a chance to share about themselves and what brought them to coaching. You may need to ask questions – keep them as open ended as possible. (Not answered in a “yes” or “no” or other one word response.) Remember to keep the focus on them.

- In the first session you will try to identify where the family currently is and what direction they would like to take.
 - You may ask questions about concerns they have, what they have tried, what would they like to happen... LISTEN CAREFULLY.
 - Pay attention to body language and underlying concerns. Summarize verbally before they go on to clarify that you understand.
- You will outline expectations for the number of times you will get together. (Generally, we start with 4-6 times, but this can be extended later if you both desire). You will also determine the best time and place.
- Usually 45 -60 minutes is an ideal length of time for a coaching session, but you can adjust based on what works well in each case. You should develop an understanding about this and honor the timing.
- You will confirm contact information and send a brief email summary after each session, paying close attention to any action plan. This gives a concrete accountability base. Also, be sure to include a reminder of the next meeting time and place.
- At the close of the session you will identify an action step or “homework assignment”. Follow up at least once during the intervening time to remind parents that you are praying for them and this specific work. You may be creative here!

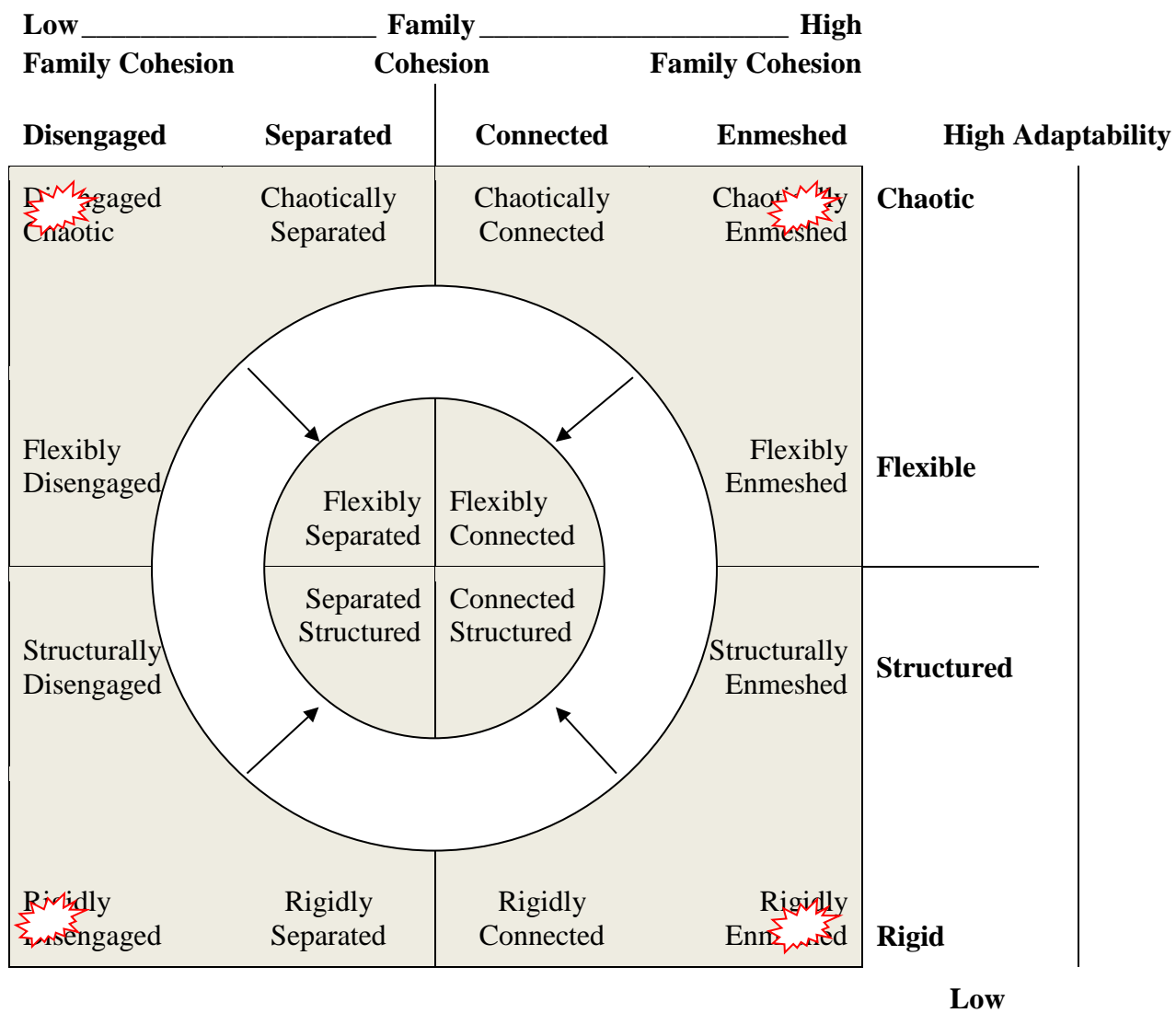
Ideas for homework or action plan in Session 1 or 2

- Colossians 3:16-17 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Not only is this a good reminder to be in the Word and yielded to God in all we say or do, but this can be put directly into practice through music.

Ask the parent(s) to choose a song that represents or reminds them of something that they are working on. They can search hymns and listen to music all week to find just the right one. Ask them then to share the words or a link to the music with you. Parents can use this song in their daily prayer time or as the situation they are working on is addressed. You both (coach and parent) will commit to learning the words and talking about its meaning. This will become the parents' theme song for this stage of life. It will be used to encourage them, perhaps as a prayer, and later to remind them of God's faithfulness.

Figure 2. Discover Family Operating Style with Circumplex Model



Adaptability Original concept: David Olson. Adapted From: *MPL 101 Parent Coaching*, (Forest, VA: Light University), 9.

The circumplex model, developed by David Olson, can be very helpful for families having difficulty determining what they need to do or where they are functionally. The two axes represent family adaptability and cohesion.

- Scale of Adaptability:
 - Chaotic = unpredictable or unstable
 - Flexible
 - Structured
 - Rigid = rule orientation – “my way or the highway”
- Scale of Cohesion:
 - Disengaged = do not do things together
 - Separated
 - Connected
 - Enmeshed = so deeply connected that they cannot separate

There are several different family styles that work well. Though there is some variation, in general families at the center of the target are the healthiest. Most families fall somewhere in the middle white zone and have room for improvement. If families fall in the corner zones, they are at risk. As you start a coaching relationship, a good exercise is to explain the chart to parents and help them to determine where their family lands. If both parents are present, this may generate some very good discussion. At any rate, they can then see how their family operates and the direction they need to move. Coaches can then lead parents in identifying a target area that can be addressed in the family through coaching and generating ideas about how to go about encouraging change. This will lead to an action plan.

Session Two

Communication

Communication is key in any relationship. In this session, we will be discussing basics of communication and how they can apply both to the relationship between coaches and parents as well as the relationship between parents and children.

Setting the Environment

As coaches interact with parents, they should be cognizant of the environment and try to give parents their full attention. Coaches, let your comfort show; smile and be relaxed. Change and new situations (like sharing with you) can be difficult for the parents. Cell phones should be turned off or muted. Let your relationship develop naturally and not seem scripted. Use encouraging gestures and exude positive body language.

Listening

Catherine Hart Weber, PhD, identified listening as a key for effective transformational communication and conversation. Good listening is vital to strengthening any type of relationship. Dr. Hart Weber identified four different levels of listening, all of which are instrumental in building strong relationships:

- Active Listening – gathering facts – hearing what is actually said, leaning in, nodding, etc.
- Soulful Listening – empathy – listening with compassion (not judgment)
- Reflective Listening – being able to repeat and reword what is being said, clarifying, noticing what is in the gaps and the parent body language

- Spiritual Listening – discerning, praying for insight¹

We will employ these to the best of our ability and help parents to do so in their family as well.

Responding to Emotions

If strong emotions present themselves, be patient and don't over-react.

- Proverbs 15:1 – A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- Galatians 6:1-3 – Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

When someone expresses strong emotion, it can be a great relief for them. Coaches who witness this with parents, or parents who witness this with their children, need to be prepared to act in a calm, supportive way.

- Give people time to cry. Silence is often very powerful. Allow the Holy Spirit to move.
- Let them know you are not overwhelmed. You can do this by touching them gently on the shoulder or knee. If they say, "I'm sorry for crying," respond with something like, "that is OK. God knows the depth of your pain and is with you."
- Lean in, nod, and follow with prayer right then and there if appropriate. You don't want them to feel embarrassed for revealing deep feelings, but safe. So stay calm, pray, and trust the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Judgment

Jesus said: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6: 37-38)

¹ Catherine Hart Weber, Ph.D, "Relationships and Communication: Core Coaching Skills", DVD Series 101, COCH 104. *Life Coaching Professional* (Forrest: Light University, 2008).

It is often hard not to make judgments both as a coach and as a parent. At some level, a parent is responsible for direction and correction of their children. When a child is young this is very direct. This is not judgmental – it is protective guidance and correction. God, our father, does that for us as well.

And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:

My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,

and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,

because the Lord disciplines those he loves,

and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

- Hebrew 12:5-7

As a child ages, he/she becomes more active in the process of adapting behavior, internalizing God's Word to inform his/her conscience. Young children often will perceive a parent's direction as God's Word. "I can hear my mom's (or dad's) voice in my head, telling me to do (or not do) something." As children continue to grow, they will discover their parents make mistakes, but also begin to realize that the Word of God remains unchanging. While parents entrust our children to God as infants, they learn to do this experientially as children become more independent. It is best for kids to make mistakes at home where there is a safety net of direct family support. Parents need to learn to set boundaries and enforce consequences regularly and to widen those boundaries as their children grow up. This is where we learn the true meaning of entrusting them to God. We must be aware of their growth and not continue to treat them as small children as they approach adulthood.

Likewise, coaches cannot judge the parents they are working with, but come alongside them, brainstorm with them, and help them identify possible ways to move beyond the current circumstances with which they are struggling. Most of the time, coaches don't need to point out "that was dumb" - parents already know.

If they have walked through a similar tough time, coaches can share how God used that and brought them through. It is okay to let parents know that we are not always unscathed when we emerge. The goal would be for coaches to share in a way that brings these parents to a new insight and direction. They need enough acceptance and encouragement from coaches to take the next steps to make positive change. Not only will coaches be helping them with whatever the issues are, but they will be modeling the way of Christ. Jesus didn't condemn; he set people free. He gave them new sight and life direction. It is exciting to think that He may be using us to do the same thing.

Conflict Management Basics

When things are "heating up" in your session, between parents, or between parents and their children, conflict management concepts are essential for positive outcome. These are things for both parents and coaches to keep in mind.

- 1) Do not respond when emotionally charged. The brain does not function rationally during these times. The body reacts with the "fight or flight" response of the autonomic system. Automatic survival responses over shadow reason. Learn when to take a brief break and to signal the need for one. Respect the request for a time-out. It could be as simple as counting to ten or taking a ten minute walk.
- 2) However, don't "sleep on it." Ephesians 4:26-27 says: "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." Resolve small conflicts quickly so they don't fester into something bigger. I call this "keeping short accounts."
- 3) Try not to place blame, but share how you feel in a statement such as; "I feel _____ when _____." Avoid: "You make me...."
- 4) Avoid gunpowder words such as **always** and **never**.

- 5) Stick to one subject or topic and agree to come back to tangent concerns at another time.
- 6) Listen without interruption and summarize what the other person was saying (whether you agree with it or not) before responding. This helps you to listen and the other person to know you heard them.
- 7) Attack the problem NOT the person. Own the problem together so that together you can seek a solution. Look for underlying meaning. Share truth.
- 8) Seek forgiveness and grant it whenever possible.
- 9) Coaches should ask powerful questions like “Why do you feel that way?” “What would you like to have happen?” “What is one thing you could do?” (or brainstorm several options and choose one) Seek mutual consent to try.
- 10) Coaches need to hold parents accountable. Check in and see how they are doing.

* * * * *

Assignment idea: Role Play - act out a situation with Coaches present. Help them stay on task and give specific directions for working out an issue at home. Report back next week on how they did. Act it out again if necessary.

Session Three

Roles and Responsibilities of Parents

Parents are primary teachers and guides for their children in all areas of life, though they don't always think of childrearing that way. As Reggie Joiner said in his book Think Orange "the church and the family are God's plan for passing the faith." Parents have much more exposure to their growing children than any person in the church. They have great influence.

Often, Christians in our culture struggle to pass the faith on to the next generation. While in many ways these are wonderful times, they are also very difficult, and families are becoming very disjointed. The family unit, which used to live, work, play and worship together, is now disintegrating. Family roles and responsibilities seem different today than they did in Biblical times. However, the timeless truths of God's word stand the test of time and are helpful for parents today.

(Consider the time when the wandering Israelites were about to enter into the land God promised them. At this point in history, Moses recounts God's faithfulness and charges the people, the Israelite clans and groups of families, to remember and seek God always. God told Moses that he would not be able to enter the Promised Land himself, but that he should prepare the people. Moses not only endorses his successor for leadership, but he also gives specific instructions to all parents and families on how to maintain and pass the legacy of faith.) Moses' carefully chosen last words, loving guidelines on passing faith, are recorded in Deuteronomy 6: 4-9:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. *Impress them on your children. Talk about*

them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your

foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Italics mine)

Many today have lost sight of this spiritual directive. They have relinquished this command; perhaps because our society encourages tolerance, individuality, and options from a plethora of worldviews. We are hurt; families are broken. Some try to parent alone, while others try to blend with another. How then, in the midst of our world today, can parents pass the faith to their children and be the best parents they can be?

Personal transitional comments shown in green.

A good place to begin is to review the roles parents have as mother/wife and father/husband.

This can be followed by having the parents individually answer questions about their expectations for the roles they carry. Then, they can bring their lists together, discuss them, and devise a plan to raise their family and honor their commitment to each other. Single parents can identify the places they need their extended family to assist and then deliberately seek support.

Mothers: Keepers of the home. Though roles are changing with so many women today working outside the home, women still bear the children and are usually seen as the primary nurturer.

There is much talk in society today of “Super Mom” - one that can work outside the home all day, keep the house clean, raise the children, and cook up a good meal. She is the primary schedule keeper and taxi service. Those who somehow navigate this territory know that much of this is a facade. The Super Mom may actually be hiring a housekeeper/cleaning service, only seeing the children after work and weekends, and getting a lot of prepared or fast food. She generally is exhausted and can unwittingly neglect her husband and children as well as her

spiritual life. Since some of the greatest gifts she will pass on to her children as their first teacher and keeper of the family life are nurturing attention and love, neglect in these areas can be devastating.

Fathers: Not only support the family - acting primarily as the “bread-winner” and authority - but work as the one who validates all of the others in the family. He does this by showing that each child is a valuable part of the family, beautiful and worthy of his attention. He is the spiritual leader, revealing his commitment to God and his family. This is why fathers need to be engaged with their children at every stage of development and give them the gift of blessing. (We will talk more about this later, but is critical to understand that the father is being undermined in our society. Consider the Disney movies for children. How often is the Dad portrayed as intelligent and important for the child? Is he even present?)

In the late 90’s, an article was written about the “Non-Essential Father” in an apparent effort to change the structure of families. It was stated that women can work as well as men to support the family and that they weren’t even needed for procreation, as women could seek artificial insemination. Single parents and homosexual parents are now perceived to be able to raise children every bit as well as any other family structure. Sadly, the facts are that when the father is absent, the children exhibit increase delinquent behavior, decreased academic achievement, there are higher rates of sexual deviance, increased eating disorders and other addictions, as well as depression.² Fathers are very important.

Step Families: These are families that form when one or both of the parents have divorced their previous spouse. No matter how amicable the separation was, there will still be hurts and trials to overcome as new couples form a family and seek to make this new union work. If children

² David Stoop, PhD, "Strong Fathers/Strong Sons and Daughters." *cbc-youth.com*. 2012. <http://www.cbc-youth.com/pdf/Christian%20Counseling/Unit%202/Session%205.pdf> (accessed February 13, 2012).

are in the home, another layer of adjustment and coordination is added. Often, there are other parents outside the home, which will play a role in the family life.

Within step family marriages, the commitment to God and each other as spouses must remain strong. The need for patience and communication is multiplied. An excellent study to do with these parents is The Smart Step Family by Ron Deal. In this study, Mr. Deal helps parents discover a redemptive God, who loves, forgives, and provides strength for the journey.³ He addresses pitfalls and challenges that this family unit will encounter and helps them to persevere and embrace a new life with hope. The church has always supported families, but broken families are often ill-equipped for the future. Ministry to this very large group of the population and people in our churches must be addressed.

* * * * *

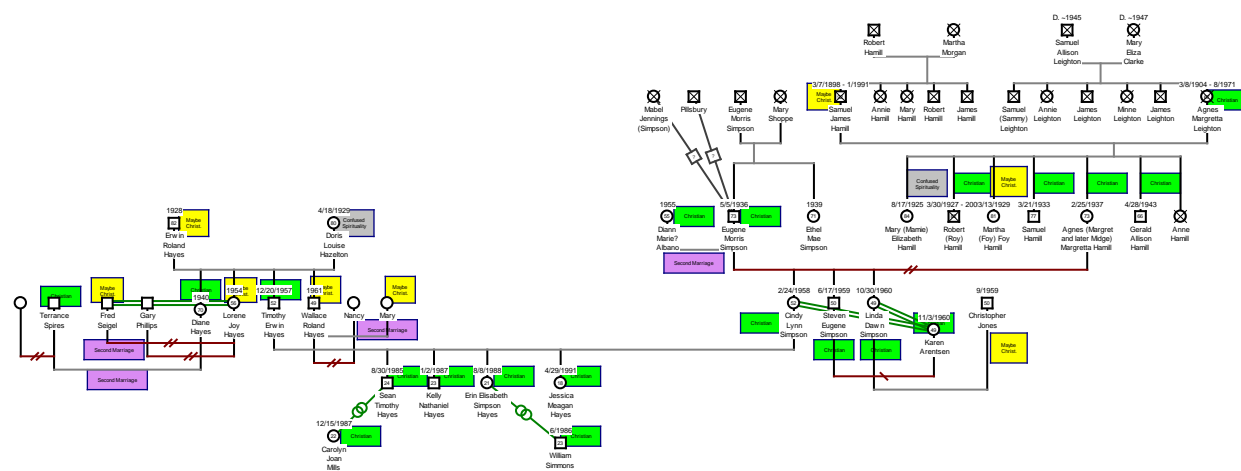
Assignment idea: Create a family Genogram. The mom should do her family of origin and the dad should do his. (An example is attached on the next page.) Basically, parents create a family tree identifying parents, siblings, grandparents. Then, they could discuss various issues as they have been passed down through the generations. For example: parenting style, faith orientation, divorce-blended family dynamic, health concerns, addictions, education, special abilities (artistic, musical, mathematical...) and so forth.

After sharing, the parents can then extend the chart to include their nuclear family and discuss how their family of origin has affected them and what they would like to pass on to their children. There will be divergence. This reveals expectations and helps the parents understand each other as they determine how together they want to lead their family. A few different issues that surface could be worked on within the coaching relationship for several weeks. Parents will

³ Ron L Deal, *The Smart Step-Family : Seven Steps to a Healthy Family*. (Bethany House Publishers: Bloomington, 2006), 51.

be able to develop a united front and work together with compassion for one another and their children. This exercise allows them to focus on parenting with purpose and on purpose. Special attention should be given to the whole concept of spiritual leadership. How will the children be taught? What things are the parents deliberately incorporating into their family life that help the children learn about God and faith? Remind the parents to seize teachable moments.

Insert full size genogram example page here:



Example genogram⁴

⁴ Example genogram is that of the author, C. Hayes, 2010.

Session Four

Personality, Love Language, and Passages, and the Blessing

One of the most helpful ways to help two people communicate better is to understand each person's personality/learning style. This will facilitate coaches' work with the parents and parents' work within their families. The scripture says in Proverbs 22:6,

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."

This literally means to teach them according to their bent; the way God designed them personally. Each one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made – unique and precious in His sight. It is therefore helpful for parents to get a grasp on the special characteristics of each member of their family.

DISC Profile

The DISC is one of many useful assessment tools that can help guide family interactions as parents begin to understand their own personality traits, as well as those of their spouses and children. A basic understanding of these components may help coaches work with parents, and they in turn with their family unit.

The DISC Profile is a nonjudgmental tool used for understanding behavioral types and personality styles. It helps people explore behavior across four primary dimensions:

DISC is a quadrant behavioral model based on the work of Dr. William Moulton Marston (1893-1947) to examine the behavior of individuals in their environment or within a specific situation (otherwise known as environment). It therefore focuses on the styles and preferences of such behavior.

There are four main personality dimensions of traits within the DISC model. These dimensions are:

Dominance- Describes the way you deal with problems, assert yourself and control situation.

Influence- Describes the way you deal with people, the way you communicate and relate to others.

Steadiness – Describes your temperament – patience, persistence and thoughtfulness.

Conscientiousness - Describes how you approach and organize your activity, procedures and responsibilities.⁵

People high in these dimensions tend to have the following characteristics:

1. **Dominance:** To the point, decisive and bottom line oriented. People with strong dominance tend to be independent and results driven. They are strong-willed people who enjoy challenges, taking action, and immediate results.
2. **Influence:** Optimistic and outgoing. People who thrive on influence tend to be highly social and gregarious. They prefer participating on teams, sharing thoughts, and entertaining and energizing others.
3. **Steadiness:** Empathetic & Cooperative. People who test high on the steadiness scale tend to be team players and are supportive and helpful to others. They prefer being behind the scene, working in consistent and predictable ways. They are often good listeners and avoid change and conflict.
4. **Conscientiousness:** Concerned, Cautious & Correct. Strongly conscientious people are often focused on details and quality. They plan ahead, constantly check for accuracy, and want to know "how" and "why."⁶

Life Coach Georgia Shaffer, M.A., made the following observations about each of these personality types in regard to coaching:

- The **D** personality is a natural leader, who is intense and may be impatient. This person will work hard for the Coach they perceive is competent.
- The **I** personality may have difficulty breaking down problems into smaller chunks, they are extroverted (getting energy from being with others), and like attention. They seek and need approval.

⁵ "What is the DISC?" *123 Test*, 2013 .<http://www/123test.com/what-is-disc/>(accessed July11,2013).

⁶ Center for Internal Change, Inc. "DISC Classic 2.0 Profile – the D.I.S.C. Learning Model." *Internal Change.com*. 2012, http://www.internalchange.com/disc_classic_2_profile.asp/ (accessed 2012).

- The **S** personality likes to mull over ideas and will respond well to being given questions to reflect on between sessions. They may neglect themselves to help others.
- The **C** personality fears failure and may be a disappointment to himself. It is best to give them one task at a time to focus on.

Further, Ms. Shaffer says that as coaches, we tend to praise those qualities we have ourselves, and we need to be careful not to discourage different personalities.⁷

It is helpful to read through these and try to see how your disposition affects the way you interact. You can take a free online DISC analysis at: <http://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test/index.php>. It is also helpful to understand those you live and work with. You might try this for fun at home and suggest the parents you are working with do the same.

Love Languages

Another meaningful tool to understand is the predominant love languages and how they affect communication. Gary Chapman has written several books on love languages as they apply to adults, teens, and children. Using them as a coach will help you relate to the parents and help them relate to each other and their children. In a nutshell the 5 Love Languages are:

Words of Affirmation

Actions don't always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, "I love you," are important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten.

Quality Time

In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, "I love you," like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes your

⁷ Georgia Shaffer, M.A. "Facilitating, Learning and Change: Advanced Coaching Skills, DVD Series 101, COCH 105." *Life Coaching Professional*. Forest: Light University, 2008.

significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

Receiving Gifts

Don't mistake this love language for materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A missed birthday, anniversary, or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous—so would the absence of everyday gestures.

Acts of Service

Can vacuuming the floors really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an "Acts of Service" person will speak volumes. The words he or she most want to hear: "Let me do that for you." Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language their feelings don't matter.

Physical Touch

This language isn't all about the bedroom. A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face—they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.⁸

If parents are having trouble understanding or communicating with their children (or their spouse) the books that Dr. Chapman wrote on love languages would be excellent resources.

Chapman takes these basic concepts and helps us understand how they affect expressions of Love and other issues parents may be facing with their children – or each other.

Can you identify your love language? Take the free quiz on the 5 Love Languages website: <http://www.5lovelanguages.com/assessments/love/> and see if you are right. Learn to love others in the language that speaks to them. It only makes sense. Doing a study that uses the appropriate book for the family you are working with can be very meaningful.

⁸ Gary Chapman, "The 5 Love Languages." *5lovelanguages.com* August 09, 2007. <http://www.5lovelanguages.com/learn-the-languages/the-five-love-languages/> (accessed February 01, 2012).

Passages and Blessing

There are natural times during the development of each child when parents can celebrate a child's achievement and growth. Some of these can be done privately and others as part of the body of Christ. Some that we have identified are:

- Baby/family dedication
- Affirming the school aged child
- Baptism
- Coming of age (around 11-12 years old)
- Young Man/ Womanhood (around the age of 16)
- Launching into adulthood (around the age of 18)

Coaches can attend these events and help parents to get connected to this area of support.

Rolling Hills has in place a family dedication service that is quite meaningful. Parents have the chance to invite family and friends as they dedicate their children and themselves to the Lord.

They choose a special verse for each child, and those gathered to celebrate with them have the opportunity to pray individually for each family. It is a wonderful opportunity for parents to present their child to God and promise to uphold their Biblical responsibilities as parents.

Affirming the school age child comes at a significant time in the development of a child, when then have learned to express themselves verbally, become inquisitive, physically independent, and are ready for formal education and training. Often, children will be comfortable for several hours away from their parents as they are entrusted to other teachers outside the home. This is a milestone and a wonderful opportunity to celebrate. Rolling Hills will be launching a yearlong program during the Kindergarten year, with formal ceremonies at the beginning and of the year, to commemorate this time. Parents can also work to bless the child in small ways throughout this special year, and coaches can help parents develop ideas along those lines. As children learn

to read they begin to have direct access to God's Word for the first time. This is indeed an exciting opportunity to celebrate.

Baptism - immersion in water to symbolize the acceptance of the forgiveness of our sins and commitment to Jesus Christ through his death, burial, and resurrection - is celebrated monthly at Rolling Hills as individuals make a profession of faith. We understand that the Baptism celebration is a testimony to the inward act of faith that has already taken place. We have excellent training sessions for children and their parents to be sure they understand the commitment they are making publicly. We also have a class for adults who have made a confession of faith and want to follow it with formal baptism. It is wonderful to hear testimonies and share as the larger church body in this event which takes place in our gallery between services. Often parents or other significant adults are given the honor of performing the baptism and blessing the new Christian.

The coming of age celebration, the timing for which is to be determined individually by the parents (somewhere between the child's age of 11 to 14), is usually marked by some special family event. The church supports the parents by giving them ideas and testimonies about how this can be done so that parents may deliberately seek to give their children a blessing as they prepare for adulthood. This is an important rite of passage that mothers can do for daughters, fathers for sons, or be done together by both parents and often involves other significant adults who serve as mentors and pledge their support to the family and the young person specifically. Our church is instituting an annual meeting for parents interested in learning more about this so that they may deliberately choose mentors and mark this milestone of life with gifts and blessing. Celebrating young adulthood in the family is another opportunity to bless your child. Often this is done when children learn to drive and begin to be more significantly independent from the

nuclear family. Children are still an integral part of the family, but are making adult decisions, learning to function as an adult on the family team by taking on more responsibilities for themselves and others. When parents bless this time and recognize the child's growth, it honors the child and helps ease tension that may otherwise develop when this growth goes unacknowledged. RHCC offers resources for parents so that they may understand the challenges of these teenage years and use this milestone to proactively invest in their child by affirming their development and blessing them. This includes a special family commemoration and blessing that they can do at home.

Finally, Rolling Hills hosts a graduation celebration and blessing as the young people in our family move out of the home and off to college or a job. We want to acknowledge their adulthood, celebrate their gifts and talents, and pray for God's direction, protection, and peace in their lives. This can be done privately but also will be offered as a ceremony of blessing by the church. Family, friends, and mentors will be invited and have the opportunity to call out the character strengths and qualities that they enjoy about the young person. They will share in picturing a special future that God has in store for each child, as they offer their prayers and blessings. We plan to host a very special dinner and give each family the opportunity to share publicly. Each family will share a gift to commemorate this time and signify the blessing. Parents will choose something that suits their child and what they see in him or her. The church offers an information session early in the final school year for parents so that they can begin thinking about how this will unfold and what they want to share.

Session Five

The Blessing, Review, Questions and Coach Dedication

The Blessing /Video

In The Blessing: Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance, Trent and Smalley suggest five vital factors for **giving a blessing**: Meaningful and Appropriate Touch, a Spoken Message, Picturing a Special Future for Him or Her, and An Active Commitment to Fulfill the Blessing.

- 1) Use meaningful and appropriate touch. Many Psychologists would suggest that humans require touch from others to help them feel loved and accepted. Children, especially need physical closeness to grow emotionally.
- 2) **It is best to use a spoken message.**
- 3) **We should use a message that the receiver will perceive as attaching high value.**
Empty praise is not of permanent value because the subject will eventually question the comment and maybe its source. Humans need to feel valued, and they feel best when they believe that their loved ones value them highly.
- 4) **Help the person being blessed by communicating a picture of a special future for him or her.**
- 5) **Provide them an active commitment.** Promise you will help them succeed.

Final notes or questions...

Coaches Dedication

Color Coded by suggested reader

Green –Parent Coach Trainer

Purple – RHCC Pastor

Black - All

Dedication Service

We thank you for committing to God’s Service through Parent Coaching. None of us is perfect.

We are all sinners redeemed by the blood of Jesus. This is the testimony we share. In our weakness His strength is revealed. In the body of Christ, His church, we serve one another with the gifts and life that He has given us. We are passing the legacy of His truth and love on.

Sing or play music: In Christ Alone

Treasure in Fragile Clay Jars

2 Corinthians 4:5b-9

We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not

driven to despair. 9 We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down,
but we are not destroyed.

Video by Nic Allen:

What is this treasure? What does that mean? Consider the Parable of the Candle:

The Parable Of The Candles



**There was a blackout one night. When the lights went out,
I fumbled to the closet where we keep the candles for nights like this...I lit four of them.**

**I was turning to leave with the large candle in my hand when I heard a voice, "Now, hold it
right there."**

"Who said that?"

"I did." The voice was near my hand.

"Who are you? What are you?"

"I'm a candle."

**"But you can't take me out. I'm not ready,"
the candle explained with pleading eyes. "I need more preparation."**

I couldn't believe my ears. "More preparation?"

"Yeah, I've decided I need to research this job of light-giving
so I won't go out and make a bunch of mistakes.
You'd be surprised how distorted the glow of an untrained candle can be...."

"All right then," I said. "You're not the only candle on the shelf.
I'll blow you out and take the others!"

But right then I heard other voices, "We aren't going either!"

I turned to the other candles, "You are candles and your job is to light dark places!"

"Well, that may be what you think," said the first one,
"You may think we have to go, but I'm busy...
I'm meditating on the importance of light. It's really enlightening."...

"And you other two," I asked, "are you going to stay too?"

A short, fat, purple candle with plump cheeks spoke up.
"I'm waiting to get my life together, I'm not stable enough."

The last candle had a female voice, very pleasant to the ear.
"I'd like to help," she explained, "but lighting the darkness is not my gift...I'm a singer.
I sing to other candles to encourage them to burn more brightly."

She began a rendition of "This Little Light of Mine"
The other three joined in, filling the closet with singing....
I took a step back and considered the absurdity of it all.
Four perfectly healthy candles singing to each other about light
but refusing to come out of the closet. - Author Unknown

*This world is full of darkness, with many people stumbling around trying to find their way.
You can be a light for them, for His light will shine through you.*

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN."

Matthew 5:14-16

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Titus 2:1-8

You have responded to God's Call – As He is counting on you, you can count on Him.

Each participant read a scripture of God's Promises and Blessings:

- *“Surely Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23:6*
- *“Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and wondrous things you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3*

- *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will guide you on the right path.” Proverbs 3:5,6*
- *“Your eyes will seek your Teacher, and whenever you turn to the right or the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: “This is the way. Walk in it.” ”
Isaiah 30:20-21*
- *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13*
- *“I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is my right hand I will not be shaken.” Psalm 16:8*
- *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Luke 11:9*
- *For I know the plans I have for you, plans for your welfare, not disaster, to give you a hope and a future. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”
Jeremiah 29:11-13*
- *“To You, my strength, I sing praises, because God is my Stronghold – my faithful God.” Psalm 59:17*
- *“If you remain in Me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you.” John 15:7*
- *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33*
- *“The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand.” Deuteronomy 30:9*

- *“Commit your activities to the Lord and your plans will be achieved.” Proverbs 16:3*
- *“For You are my rock and my Fortress; You lead me and guide me because of your name. You are my strength. Into your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.” Psalm 31:3, 4b-5*
- *“Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37: 4*

Anointing - Words of Affirmation

Incorporating Psalms 23, 27, *In Christ Alone* - Responsive Reading

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want

In Christ alone, my hope is found

He is my light, my strength, my song

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters

This Cornerstone, this solid ground

Firm through the fiercest drought and storm

The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?

What heights of love, what depths of peace

When fears are stilled, when strivings cease

He restores my soul

My Comforter, my All in All

You anoint my head with oil

My cup overflows

Here in the love of Christ I stand.

Each coach will step forward to receive the following blessing:

As you serve in the Parent Coaching Ministry, may His light so shine through you that you not only know His unsurpassed peace, but you light the way for others.

We anoint you _____ for this service.

Presentation of Certificate

Sing/Music

Blessings on your Service - Amen

APPENDIX G

PARENT COACHING INFORMATION AND TESTIMONIES

Main Article from Cindy Hayes

Are you part of the growing number of young families at Rolling Hills? If so we would love to come alongside of you to support your efforts to raise your children for the Lord. You may be excited about your growing family and want to do it “right”. You may be overwhelmed, unsure, dealing with difficult situations or children. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have seasoned Christian parents walk with you through this season of life?

We have such a team of parents called Parent Coaches. These parents have completed training course are ready to serve you and your family. Everyone can benefit from a coach; this is evident in sports and music training, but is really true in every aspect of life. The scriptures remind us in Titus 2 that the (older) more experienced Christians need to pass their knowledge and commitment to family life on to the next generation.

These coaches are not experts; they are committed parents, just like you, who are a little further down the road and are willing to let God use their life experiences for family ministry. We'd love to help get you connected, and we are excited about this opportunity for you as we share with one another in the body of Christ.

For more information about Coach Training or to connect with a Coach contact Cindy Hayes, Parent Coaching Coordinator, at hayes4him@gmail.com.

Testimonial Statements

Jeremy and Molly Westmoreland (Coaches)

We feel so blessed to be partnered with Ashley and Brandon, and we look forward to walking alongside them. Why did we choose to be a part of this ministry because we believe in doing life together. We were blessed to have a couple be willing to allow us to be a part of their live classroom and learn from them not in theory or just words but in action. We have no desire or ability to provide the answers, just a heart-felt longing to be real about our highs and lows in our journey of marriage and family.

Brandon and Ashley Powell (Coached Parents)

Brandon and I are so thankful for the opportunity to have a family in our church walk alongside us as we navigate through this season of life. We know what the Bible says about prioritizing Christ, spouse, and kids and about the importance of discipling our children; however, we wanted to know what that looks like as it's played out in a real-life family. The Westmorelands have welcomed us into their home and into their lives, and offer authentic encouragement, practical advice, and Biblical wisdom as we discuss questions and challenges we're facing. We are loving getting to know both Molly and Jeremy and their three great kids Sarah, Luke, and Nate, and we are blessed by the way they are making an effort to invest in Madison, our daughter, as well. We love how intentional Molly and Jeremy are about making our relationship a priority, and are looking forward to how God will continue to use them in our lives. We look forward to the time when we can invest in a young family just as they are pouring into us.

<http://vimeo.com/rhcc/parentcoaching>

Promotional video/testimonies: <http://vimeo.com/rhcc/parentcoaching>

APPENDIX H
COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

From: **Joanne L. Johnson** <jjohnson@inscapepublishing.com>
Date: Mon, Sep 15, 2014 at 4:45 PM
Subject: RE: request for permission to use DISC image in thesis
To: Cindy Hayes <hayes4him@gmail.com>

Dear Cindy,
Please go to <http://www.everythingdisc.com/Disc-Personality-Assessment-Resources.aspx#Research> and click on the white papers and research tab – you can use images within these as long as they are properly cited and referenced.
Hope this helps.
Sincerely,

Joanne L. Johnson | Manager, Channel Development & Partner Care | T: [763-765-2231](tel:763-765-2231) | F: [763-231-2276](tel:763-231-2276)

Eric Scalise Eric.Scalise@aacc.net

September 21, 2014

Hi Cindy,

You have our permission to use the Circumplex Model graphic from the course. However, the concept belongs to David Olson and he should be cited/referenced in anything you produce. You may need permission depending on the use.

Also here's another link with additional images: <https://www.google.com/search?q=circumplex+model&client=firefox-a&hs=icN&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&channel=nts&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=rsceVNzzKevIsASO9ILQDQ&ved=0CCIQsAQ&biw=1366&bih=608>
Hope this helps.

Eric

Eric T. Scalise, Ph.D., LPC, LMFT
Vice President for Professional Development
Executive Director, International Board of Christian Care
Senior Editor, AACC Publications

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VITA

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PERSONAL

Born: February 24, 1958

Married: Timothy E. Hayes, August 4, 1979.

Children: Sean Timothy, born August 30, 1985.

Kelly Nathaniel, born January 2, 1987.

Erin Elisabeth Simpson Hayes Simmons, born August 8, 1988.

Jessica Meagan, born April 29, 1991.

EDUCATIONAL

Certified Christian Life Coach, Light University and AACC, 2009.

Certification in Christian Leadership Denver Seminary, 1985.

Master of Arts in Education/Counseling, University of Colorado, 1981.

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Teaching Certification, Mercer University, 1979.

PROFESSIONAL

Counseling Director, Rolling Hills Community Church, January 2014 – present.

Christian Life Coach, My Success Partner, 2010 – present.

Counseling & Staff Director, Csehy Summer School of Music 2009 - present.

Assistant to the Director/Office Manager, Csehy Summer School of Music, 2001- 2008.

Founder, Administrator & Teacher, Kingdom Education for Young Scholars (KEYS), 2004 – 2006.

Social Sciences Teacher, Young Musicians of Virginia, 2003-2004.

Assistant Program Director, Young Musicians of Virginia, 2001-2002.

Program Director, Franktown United Methodist Church, 1997- 1999.

Substitute Teacher, Northampton County Public Schools, Virginia, 1995 – 1997.

Administrator, Walnut Hills Baptist Church Learning Center, 1991- 1994.

Volunteer Coordinator, Outreach United Resources (O.U.R.) Center and Emergency

Family Assistance Association (E.F.F.A.), 1987 – 1988.

Christian Education Coordinator, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 1983- 1984.

School Counselor, Angevine Middle School, 1982 – 1982.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

American Association of Christian Counselors, Charter Member, 2001 – present.

Christian Coaching Alliance, Member, 2012 - present.