

Hush Over Ministry to the Family! How Bad is This?

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A. Background

When we become Christians, the church teaches us how to live as a Christian in certain areas; prayer, the Word, worship, community living, etc. Acts 2:42-47 aptly describes the church life we share with each other. Many of us have small group meetings that allow us to get to know each other more deeply.

But, when it comes to the matter of what is happening at home, there is that usual hush.

Generally, we do not talk much about our personal home life in the church, especially those so-called 'sensitive' subjects like marriage, sexuality, etc. The church leadership does not ask much about this area of Christian life and the church members understand that this is something that we have to deal with by ourselves.

We all can attest to the above reality in the church body to a certain extent.

On the other hand, we all see that the family is facing tremendous struggles at the present time. They feel very much on their own in the battles to keep afloat in the seas of increasing struggles, with little help from the church in relationship- and faith-building at home. As a result, they rely very much on human culture, traditions, and a limited understanding of God's Word to live the home life.

No single family on their own is in the position to effectively equip themselves for meeting needs at various life stages of the whole life span. The church, as a community that consist of members at various life stages with various gifts and talents, is called and positioned by God to do so.

Conclusion: One main conclusion we can reach about the precarious position that the family is currently in is the passivity of the church in ministering to their needs. We believe the commitment of leadership to family ministry has a large part to play in contributing to this.

B. About The Research

1. Aim

This research set out to determine how the church leadership viewed the family condition in the church and the nature of response of the church to family ministry.

2. Research Approach

We used straw poll approach to gather the information.

The main part of the research was carried out over a period of three years, 2013-2015. We continued the research periodically after that with smaller groups of church leaders.

3. Research Design

We conducted an exploratory survey with church leaders.

4. Research Population and Selection

Setting and sample size. We conducted the surveys of church leaders at gatherings (workshops and conferences – see list below) that dealt with significant ministry issues affecting the whole church.

The first tranche of surveys was conducted in the period of 2013-2015.

- World Pentecostal Conference Mission Forum 2013. *The survey was conducted with 26 of the top world leaders involved in missions within the World Pentecostal Fellowship.*
- Family Ministry Leadership 2013 Ethiopia 2013. *We surveyed 17 of the family leaders of the city of Addis Ababa.*
- Transform World South East Asia Summit 2013. *54 key leaders from the SEA region responded to the survey.*
- Transform World 2020 Leadership Summit 2014. *42 leaders of the Transform World movement participated in the survey at their annual summit in Macon, France.*
- 2014 General Assembly of European Evangelical Alliance. *50 top leaders from the national alliances that were responsible for thousands of churches with millions of believers took part in the survey.*
- Urban India Ministries, Bangalore India 2014. *The 24 survey participants were leaders from churches in the city.*
- Annual Conference of a major Malaysian denomination 2014 (175). *The 175 survey respondents were mainly denominational leaders and pastors who were overseeing about 11,000 members.*
- Malaysia Family Movement Consultation 2015. *63 key church and family ministry leaders were surveyed at this occasion.*
- National General Assembly of Fellowship of Indonesia Evangelical Churches and Institutions 2015. *This is a member alliance of World Evangelical Alliance that has 10.2 million members in Indonesia. 101 attending denominational leaders responded to the survey.*

Most recent surveys were conducted in 2020 and 2022 as follows.

- Family Challenge training programme in Bolivia 2020. *70 leaders responded to the survey.*
- Family Challenge training programme in Uzbekistan 2022. *We had 42 leaders participated in the survey.*

Selection. Convenience sampling was used. Respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the survey.

5. Survey Method

We use a questionnaire of four questions for the surveys.

Please see the Appendix for two versions of the survey questionnaire.

C. Research Findings

1. Surveys of 2013-2015

In response to the question, 'What do you foresee the trend of breakdowns among the families in the church in the future?', 83% of the respondents, to no surprise, stated that it would 'get worse' and 'get much worse'.

Their responses to the next three questions clearly show the priority they gave to intentionally and systematically build the capacity of the family for passing on the faith to the next generation.

Questions	Response to 'Very Little' and 'Some'
How much emphasis do you think the church is giving to building healthy families in their midst?	79%
How much is the church intentionally investing in finding out the needs (marriage, parenting, faith-building, human sexuality, aging care, etc.) of their families and meeting these adequately?	87%
How much does the church intentionally equip the parents in passing on the faith to their children (all ages) at home?	84%

2. Recent Surveys (2020 & 2022)

The Bolivia and Uzbekistan survey results for the last three questions are as follows.

Questions	Response to 'Very Little' and 'Some'	
	Bolivia (171) ¹	Uzbekistan (41)
How much emphasis do you think the church is giving to building healthy families in their midst?	62%	69%
How much is the church intentionally investing in finding out the needs (marriage, parenting, faith-building, human sexuality, aging care, etc.) of their families?	74%	93%
How much does the church intentionally equip the parents in passing on the faith to their children (all ages) at home?	70%	71%

D. Research Conclusions

All surveys point us to the following conclusions about the commitment of the church leadership to discipleship of the home and, thus, the lack of this in the church corporate culture.

- ✦ The serious lack of investment of the corporate church in the discipleship of the homes in their midst.
- ✦ This lacklustre commitment is clearly seen in the neglect of intergenerational passing of faith at home – the God's assigned centre of discipleship of the future generations.

Updated: 4th March 2022

¹ Number of leaders responded to the survey.

Appendix
Survey Questionnaire

2013-2015 Version

Family Ministry in the Church

This survey is designed to get a broad indication of the state of ministry to the families in the church and the responsiveness of the church in building it. Your answers are completely anonymous.

1. What do you foresee the trend of breakdowns among the families in the church in the future?

Getting Better_____

Getting Worse_____

Getting Much Worse_____

2. How much emphasis do you think the church is giving to building healthy families in their midst?

Very little_____

Some_____

Much_____

Very much_____

3. How much is the church intentionally investing in finding out the needs (marriage, parenting, faith-building, human sexuality, aging care, etc.) of their families and meeting these adequately?

Very little_____

Some_____

Much_____

Very much_____

4. How much does the church intentionally equip the parents in passing on the faith to their children (all ages) at home?

Very little_____

Some_____

Much_____

Very much_____

Survey Questionnaire

Post-2020 Version

Family Ministry in the Church

This survey is designed to get a broad indication of the state of ministry to the families in the church and the responsiveness of the church in building it. Your answers are completely anonymous.

1. Predict the trend of the state/health of families in the church in the days to come

Very healthy_____

Healthy_____

Unhealthy_____

Very Unhealthy_____

2. How much emphasis do you think the church is giving to building healthy families in their midst?

Very little_____

Some_____

Much_____

Very much_____

3. How much is the church intentionally investing in finding out the needs (marriage, parenting, faith-building, human sexuality, aging care, etc.) of their families?

Very little_____

Some_____

Much_____

Very much_____

4. How much does the church intentionally equip the parents in passing on the faith to their children (all ages) at home?

Very little_____

Some_____

Much_____

Very much_____