

REGGIE JOINER

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**A**  
*New*  
Kind of  
*Leader*



**WHAT YOU BELIEVE CAN OPEN A DOOR  
FOR A KID OR TEENAGER'S FUTURE**

4

THERE'S A NEW KIND OF  
LEADER WHO BELIEVES

# EVERY FAMILY MATTERS

REGARDLESS





**THE CHURCH IS STRATEGICALLY  
POSITIONED IN CULTURE TO REMIND US  
THAT FAMILY MATTERS.**

Most churches I know have family as a value. They talk about family from the platform, they celebrate family through their programming, and they hold on to a picture of what they think every family should look like. Even if it's unintentional, they seem to suggest that every family matters when it's a married couple with two or more biological children who never fight about finances, have weekly family devotions, and teenagers who only listen to worship music.

The problem is that when I look around me, there are a lot of families that don't look like that.

According to the most recent U.S. Census, only 20 percent of families in the United States are made up of married couples living with their own biological children. So what about all those other families?

What about the single parents, the adoptive parents, and the grandparents who live in our communities and carry the responsibility of raising kids? **If every family matters, then we may need to consider the possibility that every parent (or guardian) matters.**

Maybe we should amplify “every family.”

**Every person who is raising, nurturing, and parenting a kid or teenager matters. Regardless.**

They matter regardless of their church attendance, denomination, nationality, political beliefs, marital status, gender, body piercings, education, weight, employment, citizenship, fashion preferences, PTA membership, tithing record, community service hours, or dental hygiene.

I know there’s some controversy in that statement. That’s okay. I’m not trying to take a political or theological stance on any of those issues. But before we can talk about how family matters, we need to at least agree that every family matters—even families that don’t measure up to what some believe is the ideal standard for family.

Too often, churches are so focused on the picture of what they want families to become that they fail to build a bridge to where families actually are.

I’m not even sure the church can really lead families to see the bigger picture of God’s love and restoration if we don’t see it ourselves.

If we want to have influence on the faith of kids and teenagers, we need to change a few things about our view of their parents. Can we start by agreeing about three things?

**Every parent matters because they matter to God.**

Maybe that sounds too theological to be practical. But here's what it means: God created every parent in His image, and loves every parent enough to send His Son to die for them. If God cares that much about every parent, maybe we should too.

**Every parent matters because they matter to their kid.**

It's easy to notice what's broken about a family when you are on the outside looking in. But most kids care a great deal about their parents—regardless of their shortcomings. An MTV<sup>1</sup> survey found that 73 percent of kids said that their *parents* are the people who make them the happiest. So it's probably safe to assume that kids care how you treat their parents.

**Every parent matters because their kids matter to them.**

Even if they aren't disciplining their kids the way you would. Even if they don't feed their kids the kind of nutrition you might. Even if they haven't dressed their kids the way you wish. Every parent cares about the kids or teenagers in their home.

1 MTV/Associated Press Survey, "Youths' stuff of happiness may surprise parents," NBC News, August 20, 2007



What if you started acting like

**WHAT HAPPENS AT HOME IS MORE IMPORTANT  
THAN WHAT HAPPENS AT CHURCH.**

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Of course what happens at church is important, but what happens at home may be even more important.

The reason is simple—time.

When we started North Point Community Church, a few of us who worked with kids and teenagers realized something sobering. Even with the kids who attended our church consistently, at best we would only have about 40 hours with them every year. That's only 40 hours to help a kid understand everything they need to know about God, and the Bible, and life.

That same day, we calculated another number that shocked us: the amount of time the average parent gets to spend with their children. It was 3,000 hours in a single year.

When you simply consider the potential of 40 hours vs. 3,000 you can see why family matters.

**No one has more potential to influence a kid than a parent.**

That's because no one else will spend the same kind of time . . .  
feeding,  
cleaning,  
transporting,  
disciplining,  
or loving that kid than their parent.

But here's something else that's true as well:

**A parent isn't the only influence a kid needs.**

Just like . . .  
a pediatrician checks up on a kid's health,  
a teacher advances a kid's education,  
a coach develops a kid's fitness,  
parents need other voices to remind them about what matters  
when it comes to shaping their kid's faith.

But remember, nearly 75 percent of the people in your  
community won't attend church this Sunday. And that  
percentage includes a lot of parents.

The truth is, if parents don't think your church matters,  
you will have a hard time influencing their family.

I'm not sure I know all the reasons that families outside the church don't go to church, but I think there are at least four.

1

Families outside the church don't TRUST us. Many parents feel as if church leaders have a motive. They assume we want to change them. They think we will turn their kid against them not toward them.

2

Families outside the church don't BELIEVE us. Many parents don't believe what church leaders say matters because we don't act like they matter. They don't believe that we really love them because we don't act like we even like them.

3

Families outside the church don't GET us. Many parents who don't go to church feel like the church is out-of touch with their issues. We just don't speak the same language. (When is the last time your waitress used the phrase "a hedge of protection"?)

4

Families outside the church don't NEED us. Parents look for help on Facebook before they look to the church. They have more resources than ever before and often see little real evidence that the church truly wants to help them win as parents.

Consider this.

Your church has one of two perspectives:

*It's their problem.* You can easily tell if this is your perspective. If it is, you probably sigh and shake your head a lot. The first thing you notice about a parent is usually something they aren't doing that they should be doing, or something that they should be doing that they aren't doing.

*It's our mission.* If you have this perspective, you are consumed with the question: What can I do to help?

If you want to change the way you see every family, then take the initiative to act like you really believe that *no one has more potential to influence a kid than a parent*. And make this simple decision: That it is your mission to help every parent win.

Maybe if we start making every family matter more to the church, the church will matter more to every family.

Or to say it another way: **We won't change the way families outside the church see us until we change the way we see them.**

There are two truths every leader should embrace if they want to make every family matter.

**Every parent wants to be a good parent.**

Maybe you're skeptical. That's okay. I've just never met a parent who walked out of the delivery room and said, "I can't wait to ruin this kid's life." Maybe they're out there. I just haven't met them.

**Every parent can do something more.**

That's true of the parent who volunteers at every church event and is fully engaged with your strategy, and it is also true of the parent who has never even heard of your church.

Can you imagine what would happen if all you did was help the average parent to do something more for their kid's faith than what they are currently doing?

What if . . .

a dad simply prayed with his son for the first time?

a grandma read a Bible story to her granddaughter?

a single mom got connected to a community of faith?

The church has unbelievable potential to influence a kid's faith when they believe in the potential of every parent to do something more.



KIDS NEED A NEW KIND OF LEADER WHO WILL  
**CONNECT WITH A PARENT.**



If you want to be a new kind of leader, you will constantly look for ways to build a bridge to the family.

Practically speaking, you may need to . . .

introduce yourself.

give a parent your phone number.

send a text to let parents know what's going on.

show up where parents show up

(like at a middle school debate tournament).

You might have to do all of those things. And you might even have to do them more than once. Connection takes consistent effort. Imagine what would happen if you . . .

only talked to your boss through a monthly email.

only saw your best friend during the summer.

only called your mom on her birthday.

Just remember, there is nothing in culture that can compare to what you can do for a family if you show up consistently to care about a kid's faith and future.

I recently spoke at a church to a group of parents about the importance of family. When I finished the message, a mom, holding her two-year-old-daughter, came up to me. She was a single parent, living in her parents' house. She looked right at me and said, "I just want to know if my daughter is going to be okay." Her picture of family hadn't worked out the way she had planned. She told me how alone she felt. She wanted to know she could find some other people who would help her fight for her daughter's future.

Every parent needs . . .  
to have an ally, so they don't feel alone.  
to know what to do today, so they have a plan.  
to see how they are winning, so they have hope.

This week, you have the potential to influence a parent simply by reminding them of the important work they're doing. When you show up consistently for their son or daughter, you have an opportunity to tell a parent something positive about their son or daughter that they might have forgotten. When you look for ways a parent is doing something right, you can encourage them to keep at it.



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MAKE A LIST OF SOME FAMILIES YOU KNOW INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF YOUR CHURCH.

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

