

**CRAIG CASTER**

**CHURCH FAMILY**  
**MINISTRY DISCIPLESHP PLAN**

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UTILIZING THE MANY OPPORTUNITIES WE HAVE AS A CHURCH TO  
DISCIPLE GOD'S PEOPLE IN MARRIAGE AND PARENTING

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## **Preface**

This outline has been written for the purpose of edifying the Christian church in the elements of the different components of family ministry. We have made some basic assumptions in preparing this material, such as: Most Christian churches are now performing some of the basic functions of family ministry that include pre-marital counseling, annual marriage retreats, men's and/or women's ministry bible study, small group home fellowship, and youth ministry. Our hope is that you will find this information helpful for enhancing discipleship of your church leaders and your flock in God's will for the family.

## **Discipleship**

Many Christian churches today have properly prioritized evangelism and evangelistic events as part of their core purpose. Unfortunately, most are not emphasizing discipleship, especially when it comes to marriage and parenting.

Statistics tell us half of the over 1,200,000 divorces each year in the U.S. proclaim to be believers. Also, over 70% of our children being raised in Christian homes after 10 + years of youth groups and/or Christian schools are walking away from their faith after leaving home. Just these two statistics alone should stir our hearts to examine our ways in the area of family ministry.

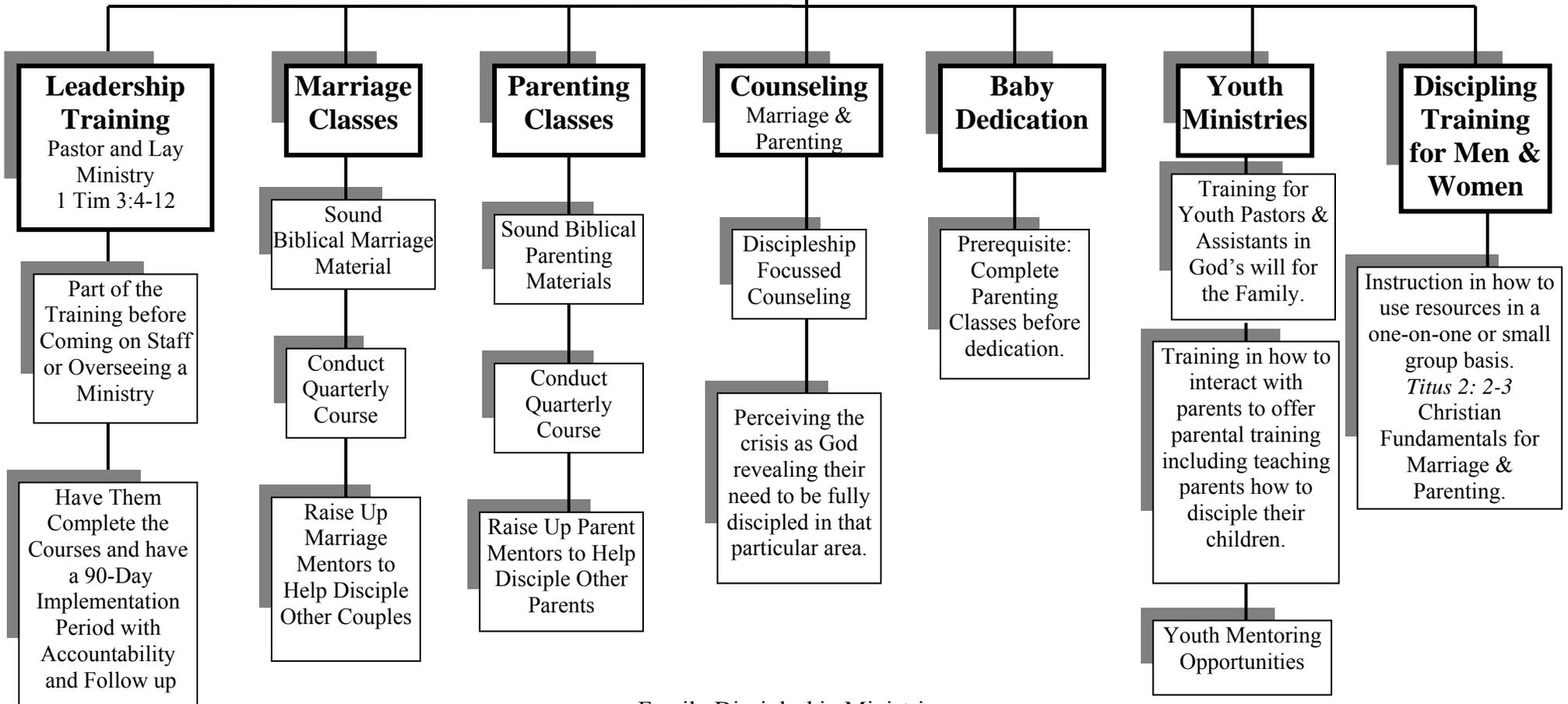
While the object of evangelism is salvation, the object of discipleship is the development of an intimate, abiding relationship with Jesus Christ, to grow in spiritual maturity, and learning how to tend to the things God has given to us according to His Word. The most powerful and effective evangelism will result naturally when mature Christians, whose lives within their homes, in the church, workplaces, and communities, reflect and glorify the true and living God as a result of their abiding relationship in Jesus Christ and following His Word.

One of the primary purposes of the Christian church is to identify and exercise the gifts of mature Christians in our church for the benefit of discipling others. Many Christians believe that being disciplined means going through a 6 or 8 week class to learn the basics of Christianity and, hopefully, the importance of having and maintaining a daily abiding relationship with Jesus. This type of class is very important, but being disciplined means more than knowing the fundamentals of being a Christian...being disciplined means you are being taught in the ways of the Lord in all areas of life.

The flow chart on the next page will help you get a better visual understanding of the many opportunities the church has in discipling people in marriage and parenting.

# Family Ministry Discipleship Plan

For Reaching Traditional, Grandparents  
Single Parents & Blended Family Parents



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## Family Ministry Discipleship Plan Description

**Why provide discipleship focused family ministry?** Since we believe that God created the family (Gen. 1:28, 2:18-24), then we must also believe He has some very important instructions for us to follow regarding how to live as a family, and also how to tend to our families. Over 90% of the body of Christ today did not have a Godly example from their parents. If we believe God has given us His instructions for the family in the Bible (Matt 28:19-20), and it is by these instructions we are to tend to the needs of His children, (John 21:15 & 17) then who or what organization did God create to disciple people in the ways of God? The Church

**Does effective ministry just happen?** No! There must be a vision (Prov. 29:18) or else busyness, confusion, and less important things will monopolize the attention of the ministers. God does not want confusion in church activities (1 Cor 14:33). He wants us to prayerfully and carefully consider His Word and His will for leading and setting the vision for church ministries. Since He has provided direction in His Word for church ministry, we should not become distracted by each wave that breaks onto our shore. If we are to fulfill his calling for ministry in our church there must be leadership, vision, strategic planning, and practical implementation.

If we are to lead, we must first be walking in His instructions and power in order to guide others along the way. We must go in advance of the people we intend to lead. Therefore, we exhort you to first train the leaders in the ways of the Lord for family ministry. There are many in church leadership positions that did not have a godly example given to them by their own parents and have never been trained (discipled) in marriage and parenting.

### Opportunity 1

**Leadership Training:** Why is this first? Because a pastor or lay minister cannot lead other people unless their lives are following God's will and ways in their own families (Titus 2:7 & 1Tim 3:4-12 are not suggestions), and there are serious consequences to the body if their homes are not in order.

If the pastor already has leadership in the church (staff or lay ministers) he should start by discipling these people through Marriage & Parenting before the rest of the body. It is also important to follow-up to ensure they are applying these principles in their home. Because many Christians, even those in church leadership positions, do not truly believe there are consequences when they compromise God's instructions in fulfilling their role as a husband, wife, or parent. A pastor needs to be very clear that these instructions are not just suggestions.

*Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go. Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants also would have been like the sand, And the offspring of your body like the grains of sand; His name would not have been cut off Nor destroyed from before Me." Isaiah 48:17-19*

God so wants to bless us, our families, and our churches, but we must choose to obey His Word. It is not sacrificing ourselves or our families that makes us better ministers for Christ; it is doing the will of God in our life. 1 Samuel 15:22-23

God even gives pastors warning not to be flippant or irresponsible about putting people in leadership positions.

1 Timothy 3:5

*(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);*

In 1 Timothy 3:10 it says, *But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.*

“...first be tested...” means a season of faithful obedience in tending to and fulfilling the will of God in these specific areas. The pastor has the authority and has been charged by God to disciple his leadership. Those sheep whom the Lord has given unique gifts to edify the body must first be disciplined and given a season to implement and walk in obedience. It is so important that the pastor exhorts his leadership to see these instructions as priorities that need to be implemented in their life – not just suggestions. Our obedience or lack of has a significant effect upon the ministry God has called us to.

Proverbs 13:13

*He who despises the word will be destroyed, But he who fears the commandment will be rewarded.*

It is common for pastors to meet with some opposition when they begin doing this with their leadership. Some feel threatened and others feel it is unnecessary because they feel or believe they don't need any help in these areas. As a pastor, reassure them the reason why you are doing this is 1 Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 2:7. As leaders, their very lives are affecting the body of Christ and when they have an opportunity to give advice, disciple or counsel someone, as the pastor, you want to make sure they are giving the Word and not their own opinion.

When new people wish to become involved in church leadership, either the pastor or another leader he designates should disciple these people through the material and allow a season for implementation in their home before bringing them on as part of the church leadership (see *Minister Application*). If they are not married or do not have children, maybe a music leader or youth pastor, they still need to be disciplined so they know the will of God in these areas. Today much of the church's approach in this area is reactionary, after the crisis has occurred. Ideally, discipleship is more about prevention, not intervention.

Many pastors today have never been disciplined themselves so they are unclear about the full meaning of discipling someone according to the pattern of the Lord. It is not just giving people a book to read and then randomly meeting with them to ask them what they learned. Nor is it just having them come to a class setting and going through a video series. Discipling others means you are teaching them step-by-step,

setting goals, and identifying the areas that need to change with a level of accountability. This is why, in all our material, there is not only workbooks that accompany the DVD series but there is also homework that involves helping you to accomplish these tasks. The importance of a pastor doing this with his leadership is he is not only following the example Jesus demonstrated in discipling the Apostles, he is also teaching them how to disciple others.

## **Opportunity 2**

**Marriage Classes:** Use the *Marriage is a Ministry* 7 week DVD series, which includes a Small Group Leaders Guide, workbook, and a personal devotional workbook. We suggest offering quarterly classes so people can plug in easily without waiting until they find themselves in the midst of a crisis. They can be done in a home setting or a church setting. These classes are great for pre-marital couples as well as seasoned veterans. Keep in mind and be in prayer about raising up marriage mentors who can come alongside those couples who are really struggling with breaking the old sinful habits and developing those new godly ones. It is good also to be praying about raising up others who can lead the class so the same persons are not over burdened. We offer on-line training at [www.parentingministry.org](http://www.parentingministry.org) to help leaders to effectively utilize the materials to disciple others in marriage.

## **Opportunity 3**

**Parenting Classes:** Use the *Parenting is a Ministry* 9 week audio or DVD series. Offer quarterly classes for all families to attend whether traditional, blended, or single parents. They can be done in home or church settings. You can also include this material as part of premarital counseling for blended family couples. Pray and seek the Lord's guidance for raising up parent mentors to help teach and disciple others as a class leader or one-on-one discipler.

## **Opportunity 4**

**Counseling:** When people come in for counseling this is one of the best opportunities we have to disciple them in the particular area in which they are seeking help. What is discipleship focused counseling? ① It is helping the person being counseled to understand why and how the situation exists in their life. ② Training (discipling) them in the biblical ways of dealing with the problem. ③ Helping them learn how to live their life, in a particular area (marriage or parenting), as the Word of God instructs. Discipleship focused counseling focuses on the root of the problem instead of temporarily treating the symptoms.

Pray and seek the Lord's guidance for raising up counselors with the spiritual gifts to help disciple others in the area of marriage and parenting. Counselors must be equipped to disciple those that are in need of counsel in these areas, and not just dealing with the particular problems at hand.

Good counseling has these elements:

1. Brings understanding to the origin of the problem, sin, hurts or ignorance.
2. Identify the fruit stemming from the problem, behaviors, wrong thinking, bad habits, etc.
3. Disciple them using God's Word as the antidote to both deal with the origin of the problem and the training up to the correct way of thinking and living. This includes marriage and parenting training.

Both the Marriage and Parenting DVD series, along with the corresponding workbooks & homework are great tools in Discipleship Focused Counseling. Contact us for a detailed strategy in using the DVD series and supplemental counseling questionnaire.

## **Opportunity 5**

**Baby Dedications:** We are asking God to bless this child and family, but also it is a public acknowledgment of dedicating this child unto the Lord (Prov 22:6). The whole premise of dedicating this child unto the Lord is the commitment to raise this child up as the Lord instructs in His Word. We, the church, must take this public dedication seriously and if we do, we will first investigate if the parents have ever been trained up (discipled) in the way God desires this child to be raised.

If parents have never received any training in this area or you are unfamiliar with the training they did receive, the church can make it a requirement to complete the *Parenting is a Ministry* video series and workbook before a date will be set for the baby dedication. The first appointment is to explain what a baby dedication is all about and why it is important to be trained up (discipled) in how to raise your child as unto the Lord. You can refer them to one of the parenting classes or meet one-on-one. I strongly encourage you to not just give them the video series and have them go through it. If they cannot join a class, then it is important to meet with them after they have completed each session in the DVD series.

## **Opportunity 6**

**Youth Ministries:** The youth pastor position gives him important insight into the lives of the families he is pastoring. It is important to establish communication between the youth pastor, the family pastor (if applicable), and the senior pastor to discuss the conditions of the families within the church. This will help you strategize how you can best reach out to those families who are struggling in the parenting and/or marriage area.

This is why it is so important to train youth pastors and assistants in God's plan in raising children. Youth pastors need this training in order to effectively minister to their youth and identify the possible problems that may be happening within the home. It is also common for parents to call or meet with the youth pastor for help and/or advice in raising their children. The youth pastors have many opportunities to encourage and exhort the youth in God's plan for authority and submitting to their

parents' discipline. If they are not trained in this, they may be giving incorrect or incomplete counsel.

Many parents will attend a 2 hour training (if offered) in how to disciple their own children. Today, less than 10% of Christian parents have a regular Bible Study in their homes and the main reason why is that they have never been trained how. Teaching parents how to implement an ongoing Bible Study with their children and providing age appropriate material is vital to us changing the tide of so many of our children walking away from their faith when they leave our homes.

Youth Mentoring & Discipleship: There are many single parent families in society today and youth with non-Christian parents. This is the primary focus for a youth mentoring and discipleship program. This is a great opportunity to share the love of Christ with a child that has little or no relationship with their absentee father or mother (*James 1:27*). Pray and seek the Lord's guidance for raising up a coordinator for the youth mentoring program with the spiritual gifts to help disciple others in the area of youth mentoring according to God's Word. Visit our website at [www.parentingministry.org](http://www.parentingministry.org); for a complete guide in how to get a youth mentoring program started.

**Discipling Training:** The Great Commission given to us by Jesus Himself is: "*Go therefore and make disciples...*" *Matthew 28:19-20*. Yet today, if you walked up and asked Christians if they are a disciple, many would respond with, "What do you mean?" Most Christians believe that being disciplined is attending a 6 week class on what it means to be a Christian. Although this is important, it falls very short of what Jesus meant when He exhorted the Church to go and make disciples.

Jesus, the best teacher there ever was and will be, spent 3 years pouring Himself into 12 men and we think we can do this in 6 weeks? We need to teach Christians what it means to answer the call of being a disciple of Christ; how to come alongside other believers and teach them how to have an intimate relationship with Jesus, what we believe as Christians, and also, if married or have children, how to fulfill God's will in these areas.

*Titus 2:1-10* exhorts the older (mature Christians) to disciple the younger (baby Christians) in these things. Not only do we need to teach them *how* to disciple, but also *what* to disciple, providing good biblical tools to equip the disciplers, to help them be more effective and strategic in discipling others is very important. This also helps the pastor to ensure consistency of what is being taught.

### **How to Begin:**

- 1) Pray. It is very clear by both the conditions of many of our families within the body of Christ and the blindness and apathy toward this crisis that Satan has and is at work here. We must bind the enemy by praying for the hurting families, praying for God to raise up leaders in this area, and praying for God's protection as you move forward in your family ministry.

- 2) Start with your leadership. Not only getting them to pray along with you, but also schedule their training in both marriage and parenting as your **first priority**. 1 Tim 3 – tells us if their homes are not in order then their ministry will be weak. I strongly suggest the senior pastor disciple the staff personally in both of these areas.
- 3) Raise up either a pastor or lay minister to oversee the ongoing marriage and parenting ministries. Set a vision and strategy to reach the families in your church with the materials. Regular exhortation from the pastor in this area to the people is critical along with a planned strategy (see flow chart).
- 4) Additional training for those who are called to counsel may be needed for both marriage or parenting issues. Contact our office to receive Discipleship Focused Counseling Strategies.

### **From the Founder – Craig Caster**

I pray that this information has blessed and encouraged you. Please let us know if we can help you in ministering to the families within your church. We currently have much of our materials written in Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and German. We are reaching out to many countries with our materials and conducting conferences. If you know of churches that speak these languages in other countries, and you believe these materials will help them, please let us know or have them contact us at [www.parentingministry.org](http://www.parentingministry.org). May the Lord bless you, your family, and your ministry.

In Christ,

