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A BIBLE STUDY SERIES: THE FAMILY-CENTERED, CHURCH-SUPPORTED PARADIGM SHIFT FOR RAISING CHILDREN IN THE FAITH AT SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

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A BIBLE STUDY SERIES:
THE FAMILY-CENTERED, CHURCH-SUPPORTED PARADIGM SHIFT FOR RAISING
CHILDREN IN THE FAITH AT SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

A Major Applied Project
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Doctor of Ministry Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By
Rev. Michael J. Nielsen
November, 2021

Approved by:	Rev. Dr. Mart Thompson	MAP Advisor
	Rev. Dr. Robert Kolb	Reader
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This project is first dedicated to my Heavenly Father. He is the only perfect Father. To my parents, Jeffrey and Sandra Nielsen, who raised me in a Christian home and provided for my Christian education. To my dear wife Emily, who alongside of me has helped raised our children in the faith. To my four children—Hannah, Miriam, Jonah, and Naomi who without them I would not have the vocation of father. To my congregation, Salem Lutheran Church, which continues to show me love and grace in my vocation as pastor as I seek to equip the families of the congregation.

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Finally, it is my Lord Jesus Christ who receives all thanks and praise. Without Him by my

side, this project would not have happened. He is the main reason for this project. Families need
Jesus!

ABBREVIATIONS

CTCR	Commission on Theology and Church Relations
LC	Large Catechism
LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
NA	Nestle, E., B Aland, K. Aland, J Karavidopoulos, C.M. Martini, & B. M. Metzger, <i>The Greek New Testament</i> . 27th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.
SC	Small Catechism

ABSTRACT

Nielsen, Michael J. “A Bible Study Series: The Family-Centered, Church-Supported Paradigm Shift for Raising Children in The Faith at Salem Lutheran Church.” Doctor of Ministry. Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary, 2021. 160 pp.

In many Christian churches there is the question: “How do we keep our children after confirmation?” The answer is a simple one: Parents. This MAP examines the relationship of the family and the church when it comes to raising children in the faith. Biblically parents are called to be the primary faith formers in the lives of their children. A multi-part Bible study was created to teach members of Salem Lutheran Church about the importance of parents being the primary faith formers in the lives of their children with the congregation supporting their work of raising their children in the faith. To measure the Bible study’s impact, surveys and interviews were conducted. They gave evidence for the use of this Bible Study Series to help families and the congregation shift to a “family-centered, church-supported” paradigm for raising children in the faith. The surveys and interviews also reveal that there is more work to do in teaching the vocation of faith formation to parents.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Research Problem

I remember February 19, 2013, very well. That is the day that my first child was born. Hannah was born that afternoon. After a while of soaking in the joy of having a healthy child and being a father for the first time, the reality hit: I was a father! I was going to need to provide what is best for my child (and now, four children)—physically, emotionally, and, most importantly spiritually. The best outcome is that they would grow up in the faith and be well-equipped disciples for Jesus. How was I going to do that? That is a question that I still ask myself: How do I do faithfully parent my children and bring them up in the fear of the Lord?

Eight- and one-half years later, as I sit in my office at Salem Lutheran Church in Barron, Wisconsin, I find that I ponder an additional question. I look out and see a stained-glass window of Jesus the Good Shepherd holding a lamb with children surrounding him.¹ Jesus wants the children to belong to him. He wants all his little lambs to be a part of his flock. Over the time I have been at Salem, I have often looked at the window and thought: “How do I help families in the congregation to see that the best thing they can do for their children is to raise them up in the fear of the Lord?”

I arrived in Barron three years ago. One of the first people I met in the community outside of the congregation was a receptionist at the local clinic. When I introduced myself as the new Pastor at Salem, she told me how her children had gone to the preschool and she wished that her grandchildren could go to it now. This has been one of the statements that I have heard several

¹ This stained-glass window was intentionally installed in this precise location as it sits above the entrance to the preschool that once was held at Salem Lutheran Church, Barron, WI. There is an image of this picture in appendix seven.

times over my three years here at Salem. Salem is a congregation that prides itself in reaching out to the community, especially to younger families. For nearly four decades, the church offered a quality preschool program to the Barron community, but for various reasons beyond their control the program was suspended. In the past, members of Salem also discussed other ways to reach out to the families of the congregation and in the community, including a day school. Presently the congregation is moving forward with a new childcare initiative.

After many conversations in my first three years at Salem, I have come to understand that serving the entire family is important to the members of Salem. Most notably for the purposes of this MAP, this includes a desire to impact the lives of children with Jesus. This desire is encompassed in the mission statement of Salem Lutheran Church. Although that statement does not mention children by name, this MAP will bring out that in the minds of church members that children are very much included among those who need “discipling.” The statement reads: “The Mission of Salem Lutheran Church is to be what God has called us to be through faith in Jesus Christ, a body of believers engaged in building the Kingdom of God by discipling the Barron area with His Word and Sacrament ministry.”² Realizing that Salem’s members desire that this mission be focused on children as well as adults, my intention is to provide guidance in how best to do that. The challenge, however, is that the church currently works with a model for Christian education that is not effectively fulfilling this mission for children. That model can be described as “congregation-centered and family-supported.” Ben Freudenberg describes that approach in this way:

Under [this] paradigm, the rules and regulations that governed Christian education were based on a church-centered, home-supported faith-development model. This

² Mission statement of Salem Lutheran Church, Barron, WI. This statement is published each Sunday in our bulletin to keep it in front of the people. We also refer to it at every Voters’ meeting and I include it on my reports to the various boards and committees.

model dictated that the home do all it could to provide support and resources for the church to teach the faith. The home helped the church be the best it could be. As a result, the church said, ‘Come to us for learning about and growing in the faith. We want to build a strong church.’³

This approach is how Salem has operated for years. For example, like most Lutheran congregations, our Sunday School and Adult Bible Study classes are age segregated. There is little involvement from the parents or guardians in catechesis; and Vacation Bible School is considered a place for the parents to drop their children off for a couple hours in the evening each day for a week in the summer.

Salem’s mission and desire to disciple the community is good because that is what God calls us to do in the Great Commission. Matthew records Jesus’ own words:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:19–20)⁴

To carry out the mission that God has called us to do as the church, we need to be disciples that are equipped for mission. One of the biggest mission areas is in our homes. Salem has made some positive efforts in serving families with the Gospel, but it still has room for growth. A paradigm shift would aid Salem in better serving its families and communities.

Moving toward a more “family-centered, church supported” approach to Christian education could strengthen the faith of both families and the church. Freudenberg helps us change our thinking with the definition of the new paradigm that I am focusing on in the MAP. Here is the working definition that we will use:

Under the new paradigm, the rules and regulations that govern Christian education are based on a home-centered, church-supported faith development model. **The**

³ Ben Freudenburg and Rick Lawrence, *The Family-Friendly Church* (Loveland, CO:Group, 1998), 98.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

new model dictates that the church do all it can to provide support and training for parents in the development of their kids' faith in their homes. The church exists to partner with homes to be the best they can be. The result: The church says, 'Come to us to learn how to teach the faith in your home. We'll be a resource of ideas, training, and programs, and we'll provide you with everything you need to teach the faith at home. Strong homes make strong churches.'⁵

Several key points should be highlighted based on this description. The first one is the sentence which is emphasized in the definition. The church must become more intentional, including her pastors, in providing support and training for parents. Barbara Reaoch,⁶ in a question-and-answer session with Barna, points out this very need for the church to have a real plan to equip and support their parents: "Every church needs to strategize how to support parents in their God-given responsibility to influence their families."⁷ The fact that this is a "God-given responsibility" will be highlighted below in the second chapter, showing that the "new paradigm" is actually taught in the Scriptures and supported by the Lutheran Confessions. It will also drive the field research which involves a Bible Study that investigates key passages of Scripture on this topic.

A second point regarding this description is my decision to emphasize the term "family," noting that families exist in a variety of forms. While Freudenberg uses the term *home-centered*, this MAP will use the term *family-centered*. The family can be a single adult, a widow or widower, grandparents raising grandchildren, a sole mother or father, or the traditional household of mom and dad and the kids.⁸

⁵ Freudenberg and Lawrence, *Family-Friendly Church*, 98. Emphasis is mine.

⁶ Barbara Reaoch is the Director of children's division at Bible Study Fellowship.

⁷ Lutheran Hour Ministries and Barna Group, *Households of Faith: The Rituals and Relationships that Turn a Home into a Sacred Space*. (Barna Group, 2019), 113.

⁸ The Department of Youth in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod did a year-long study on youth and young adults and one of the chapters written is entitled "Parents are Primary." The author of this chapter makes it clear that families do not all look the same. "Many families today are run by single or divorced parents, grandparents, or other guardians. These family dynamics may face unique challenges, but they can still be homes that raise up Christ-centered children. Our focus here on parents is not to suggest that every household must have

A third point is that the church is the place where parents (primarily when raising children) come for resources for ideas, training, and evening programs to teach the faith at home. In fact, the congregation is a partner with the parents in raising their children in the faith. The church is given the commission to make disciples. They partner with their members in families to bring this about for little disciples in homes.

Yet do congregations adequately resource homes in this partnership. The recent pandemic has had many consequences for homes and congregations. One of those has been raising awareness of the place of the home in educating children. The fast-paced lives of the people of Salem, as well as across the country, came to a quick stop in March 2020. Due to the COVID-19 virus businesses, schools and even churches were closed, including Salem, to in-person worship and in-person faith development. In hindsight, I wish this project was done before the pandemic of 2020 and into 2021. I would have been able to more completely think through the notion of a family-centered, church-supported paradigm of raising children in the faith. I would have had tools to give to families back in March 2020 to support them in raising their children in the faith. I could have used the Youth and Family Ministry team at Salem to help develop and assist in getting these resources to the families. Even now as I am writing about this project, the COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing and many at Salem and across the world are still struggling. As a result, this project has gained even more importance in my mind as I ask even more questions along with the ones I have already shared: “How do I create tools to encourage faith development in the home?” “How do I create community, even at a distance, that supports families as the primary places for faith development and discipleship?”

two faithful Christian parents. Instead we pray that God uses whatever adults will fill that role to instruct, lead, and guide children in their faith.” Dave Reuter, “Parents are Primary,” in *Relationships Count: Engaging and Retaining Millennials* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2019), 101.

During the initial months of the Pandemic, when children were sent home from in-person school and in-person faith development in the church, it revealed that parents were vital in the education of their children, both in life and in faith. This Pandemic showed that parents and households are uniquely positioned do this work.⁹ That recognition, however, is not new. In the past and especially in recent times there has been a grassroots effort¹⁰ to change the paradigm in the church-at-large when it comes to how children learn the faith. The literature review below will bring this out and show that there are many resources available to support homes in this paradigm shift. They are just not being used by a lot of churches or in many homes, which is also true at Salem Lutheran Church in Barron, Wisconsin.

Herein lies the research problem: Salem is ill-equipped to understand the importance of employing a family-centered, church-supported paradigm in the vocation of raising children in the faith.

Research Question

This MAP came from my own experience as a parent and welcoming my children into the world. I have been seeking tools and resources to help in my role as the primary faith former (disciple-maker) in the home as the father. In my pastoral experience I found that I struggle to understand what resources are out there to aid parents in their faith-forming, disciple-making vocation in raising their children. Now with the COVID-19 Pandemic and more families home

⁹ This MAP is not based on homeschooling, but I do believe that parents who homeschool understand the importance that they have in their child's lives when it comes to educating in general. "Parents across the nation abruptly became de facto home educators this spring when the coronavirus pandemic disrupted school-as-usual. Buildings were shuttered, courses were moved online, and children were sent home with extensive lesson plans an assignment for their parents: emergency homeschooling. Heading into a new school year, with districts adopting new plans for in-person, hybrid, and online education, many families are considering homeschooling on a more permanent basis." Paula Ramirez, "From Pandemic Schooling to Homeschooling: Covid-19 Concerns Accelerate the Movement's Growth, Including among Secular Families," *Christianity Today*, September 2020, 19.

¹⁰ These efforts will be discussed in detail in the theological and literature sections.

together for longer periods of time, I continue to think that there is a way to instill into the minds of parents that they are the primary disciplers of their children. My question does not call for a church-wide movement. There are resources that are being created each year which stem from the early grass-roots movement of the family-centered, church-supported paradigm for the church. My question is focused on Salem Lutheran Church and the way that we can minister to our families and children in a more Christ-centered way. The question is: Does a Bible study series on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith? This research question is being asked not just for writing this MAP, but also to assist and aid Salem and her families to come to the realization that the church is here to support them in their efforts to disciple their children. This project is also my opportunity to provide biblical teaching in regard to Christian parenting to the congregation and her leaders. This MAP is also provided to benefit the whole church as an example of how one congregation took the steps to become a more “Family Friendly Church.”¹¹

Research Purpose

The purpose of this project will be for Salem Lutheran Church to begin a cultural shift to become a more family-centered, church-supported congregation in raising children in the faith. Statistics demonstrate that when parents are involved in the faith-life of their children the faith is more effectively passed down to the next generation. Barna reports alongside of Lutheran Hour Ministries in a study entitled *Households of Faith*: “For most practicing Christian adults, the early, formative days of discipleship occur in their family of origin, usually because Christianity

¹¹ The term *Family Friendly Church* was adopted by Ben Freudenberg when he wrote his book by the same name in 1998. In this book he provides his vision for Faith formation. “Parents are the primary Christian educators in the church, and the family is the God-ordained instruction for building faith in young people and for passing faith on from one generation to the next.” Freudenberg and Lawrence, *Family Friendly Church*, 10.

was “passed down” to them by a particular relative (59%).”¹² This shows the importance of the household in faith formation and the discipleship of children. The Barna report also points out: “Practicing Christians most often credit their parents as the individuals who helped impart faith to them.”¹³ This is very encouraging to note.

Yet, do parents always realize the tremendous impact on the spiritual development of children? Reaach, in the above-mentioned interview with Barna, brings out another point that illustrates one of the reasons this project is important. She notes that “Pastors should help parents grasp the value of and need for the spiritual development of their family.”¹⁴ One of the tasks of a pastor is to equip the saints in their own vocations. One of these important vocations is that of father or mother, and pastors have a God-given duty to help equip parents for their parenting vocation.

This MAP will aid in this task of equipping mothers and fathers (and perhaps primary guardians in the case of children who live without their parents) at Salem Lutheran Church in their task of being the primary faith-formers (disciple-makers) in their homes. This MAP will also provide the congregation tools to understand what a “family-centered, church-supported” paradigm looks like so it can continue to effectively carry out the mission into the future.

The initial impetus of this MAP was to look at the current research and tools generated by the church to aid in my own vocation as father and primary faith former (disciple-maker) for my children.¹⁵ However, as I further applied this to my vocation as a pastor, the purpose evolved into

¹² Lutheran Hour Ministries, *Households of Faith*, 37

¹³ Lutheran Hour Ministries, *Households of Faith*, 39.

¹⁴ Lutheran Hour Ministries, *Households of Faith*, 113.

¹⁵ This reality is crucial to this MAP. In his article, *The Pastor’s Home as Paradigm for the Church’s Family Ministry*, David Prince points out several times that in order for the church to undergo the change, the pastor’s family needs to be a model for that change. “No church will effectively establish any form of comprehensive-coordinative family ministry unless the pastor’s family models the change that the congregation is seeking.” He goes

providing resources for my congregation, as well. It led to creating a bible-study series that addresses the Salem's need for a paradigm shift from being church-centered, family-supported to being family-centered, church-supported. This Bible study series is meant to provide godly guidance and leadership to teach that parents are the primary faith formers (disciple-makers) in the lives of children.

The MAP will also assess the level of buy-in by the members for a change in structure to better carry out the "family-centered, church-supported" paradigm for faith formation of children at Salem Lutheran Church. This buy-in will be looked at both from the viewpoint of the parents, but also from the viewpoint of congregational leadership, including Sunday School teachers, Board of Education, and Board of Elders members. This will be done through the process of surveys and interviews. This assessment is discussed later in the MAP.

The purpose of this MAP will also be able to help shed light for future planning for the congregation for equipping the family in raising children in the faith. It will also help me so that I can properly equip parents and other caregivers of children to be disciple makers in their homes.

on to write, "For a church to move toward a family-equipping model of ministry, the pastor of the church must daily equip his family." David Prince, "The Pastor's Home as Paradigm for the Church's Family Ministry," *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 4, no. 1, [2013]: 27, 29.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROJECT IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Church across the ages has placed a high importance on parents being involved in passing on the faith to their children. This emphasis is not a man-made idea or teaching. It is biblical! It comes straight from the mouth of God and was written down by Prophets and Apostles whom the Holy Spirit inspired. Chapter Two will take a journey through several texts where the Lord mandates his people to raise their children in the faith, including Deut. 6:4–9 and Eph. 6:4. After a look at the biblical foundation for this project—which will also be the basis for the first two parts of the Bible study—there will be a systematic look at the doctrine of vocation and a move into a discussion of Baptism, the Priesthood of All Believers, and Law and Gospel. The focus will be on how these doctrines relate to a family-centered approach to disciple-making. This chapter will conclude with a brief look at the historical developments of Martin Luther related to a family-centered, church-supported approach to raising children in the faith. Chapter Three will present the project in the context of recent research.

Biblical and Theological Foundation

In my journey as a parent and my own personal reading of God’s Word I have come across clear scripture texts that point out the fact that parents are diligently to teach the faith to their children. The importance of bringing up children in the Lord is covered throughout the pages of both the Old and the New Testaments. Specific instances of the importance of raising children in the faith, especially directed to parents, are found in Deuteronomy, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ephesians. There is indeed a biblical basis for the proposed paradigm shift.

Deuteronomy 6:4–9

As the Old Testament people of God are about to enter the Promised Land, Moses is giving them the final instructions in his final sermon. One of the many instructions that God gives to the people is that parents should be teaching their children.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6:4–9)¹⁶

In this text, one can see that God gave to the parents in the midst of the people of Israel this calling to teach their children diligently.

The English words “You shall teach them diligently” explain what the parents are supposed to do, however the Hebrew word¹⁷ חֲנֻכּוּם gives the reader a better description of what really is to be done. Eugene Merrill explains what is going on in the text: “So much so is this case that the covenant recipient must impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of his children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision (thus the *piel* of *sanan*).”¹⁸ He expands this image:

The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer labor of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is there to stay. Thus it is that the generations of Israelites to come must receive and transmit the words of the Lord’s everlasting covenant revelation.¹⁹

¹⁶ This is not the first time that God instructs the people of Israel to teach their children. This instruction is also mentioned in Deut. 4:9–10 and in Deut. 6:2.

¹⁷ 2nd person piel of *sanan* meaning “impress.”

¹⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 167.

¹⁹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

The image of the engraver of a monument is a remarkable one to show the importance that parents have in teaching their children the faith. When this teaching is done with great precision it is there to stay. This task was so important that it was given to the Old Testament people of God. The Old Testament era was a society when people taught by repetition, since they were an oral society. The reader of Deuteronomy can see God’s command of repetition and the constant teaching of the faith by parents. Merrill goes on to explain that this teaching is done repetitively with activity and inactivity. He shares that “sitting suggests inactivity, and walking, of course, activity. Together they encompass all of human activity. Likewise, to retire at night and rise up in the morning speaks of the totality of time. So important is covenant truth that it must be at the very center of all one’s labor and life.”²⁰ The “labor and life” to which Merrill refers applies to parents in their parenting vocation. Faith building, faith conversations, disciple-making activities should be at the center of what one does and says in the family unit—it is that important.

These faith conversations begin at home in the family. This is the foundation that God made. He established the family to be central to this process of faith formation. Deuteronomy 6 accurately illustrates the family-centered model for disciple-making as seen in Scripture. Here, “the family is placed at the center of the matter: parents are to tend to the teaching of the faith as a central part of their identity as a family and as part of the larger family of God’s people.”²¹ The Lord himself said to his people, therefore, that the family is central to faith development, and he gave them specific guidance in teaching the faith to their children.

²⁰ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

²¹ David Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home: What Does This Mean? How is This Done?* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2016), 29.

Wisdom Literature

Before moving to Eph. 6:4, which clearly shows that parents are the primary faith educators of their children, there is another portion of Scripture to see that these are not just two proof texts to “prove” the case. The next area to discuss is Wisdom Literature which shows that the Lord has given this mandate to all people, not just the people of Israel who were entering the Promised Land. It also teaches how it is done.

In Ps. 78, the Psalmist demonstrates that one of the primary modes of educating children in the faith is to tell them of the deeds of the Lord. In Ps. 78, the Psalmist writes:

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children. (Ps. 78:4–6)

The Psalmist reiterates the command of God given years earlier for fathers to teach their children and applies it as wisdom for all generations. James Luther May in his commentary writes, “The speaker views the people of God as a family whose identity and ethos are maintained across generations because parents tell children the story of how they came to be the people of the Lord.”²² Even here in the Psalms the psalmist is assuming that parents have the duty to teach their children as he is redirecting the reader back to the sermon of Moses in Deuteronomy.²³

It is not just the Psalms in the Wisdom Literature that speak on this fact that children need to be educated in the faith by their parents, it is also in the Proverbs. The book of Proverbs is focused on this task from the beginning of the book. The first nine chapters includes ten

²² James Luther May, *Psalms*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 256.

²³ “For the classic passage on teaching the faith to one’s *children* see Deuteronomy 6:6–9, for Scripture has no room for parental neutrality.” Derek Kidner, *An Introduction and Commentary: Psalms 73–150* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 281.

addresses from father to son. The first address to the son begins in verse eight: “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching” (Prov. 1:8). Andrew

Steinmann writes:

It is noteworthy that both parents are mentioned here and elsewhere in Proverbs as involved in the training of a child. Some understand the address as coming from a sage to a pupil, who is not a biological child. While a sage could address his student as “son”, the continued reference throughout Proverbs to both mother and father as instructors and trainers of children—and their pride in children who do well, and their shame when their children go astray—indicates that this is instruction from actual parents. Also note that Solomon mentions learning the same lessons from his own parents. The responsibilities of parents to train children are, therefore taken seriously in Proverbs, especially in the opening chapters.²⁴

Solomon is writing this portion of the Proverbs to his son in the first person, “my son” repeatedly.²⁵ Solomon is doing what God teaches in Scripture that is, that parents are to raise their children in the faith.

As one reads through these first nine chapters of Proverbs, one will notice that it is instruction on living by God’s Word. Steinmann writes: “This organization was part of the author’s scheme to instruct his son in the wisdom of living by the guidance of God’s Word, so that the son might receive the manifold blessings of wisdom and hence live—both in this life and for eternity.”²⁶ Solomon understood, at least at this point in his life, that God’s Word was critical for his son to live in this life.

The raising of children in the faith is not just mentioned in the first nine chapters of Proverbs,²⁷ but is also found in another one of those texts critical to the family-centered approach to raising children in the faith. Proverbs 22:6 says: “Train up a child in the way he should go;

²⁴ Andrew Steinmann, *Proverbs*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 69–70.

²⁵ There are fifteen times that this is done.

²⁶ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 61.

²⁷ See also Prov. 13:24, 19:18; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:17.

even when he is old he will not depart from it.” The very first word נָתַן of this verse offers some challenge as to how it is used. Steinmann addresses this: “While the word may here imply training, it primarily denotes consecrating and starting a child along a certain course in life.”²⁸ This now has baptismal imagery, which Steinmann discusses: “After the coming of Christ, this is fulfilled by parents who lead their child to become disciples of Jesus by Christian Baptism and by teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded in His Word.”²⁹ This is where the discipleship making begins. It begins with the parents bringing their children to Jesus through baptism and continues with teaching.

As the child is baptized and the teaching begins, the ESV translates the next key word יָרָךְ as “in the way he should go.” This is an accurate rendering of the word. As Steinmann points out, this is datival and shows the best way for him.³⁰ Steinmann goes on to say: “This fits with dominant themes in Proverbs, including the needs of the wise father and mother to instruct their son in the way of divine wisdom and the theme that divine wisdom is the only good ‘way, path.’”³¹ Parents after baptism continue to teach their children the way, the good way which is in Christ alone.

This Proverb also points out that this training is a life-long process, for the noun נַעַר can mean anything from a child in infancy to young adulthood or even as a servant or assistant.³² This learning of the faith does not stop when one is out of the house but continues through the whole of life. However, for the sake of this MAP, that portion of faith education is not covered,

²⁸ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 441.

²⁹ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 441.

³⁰ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 442.

³¹ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 442.

³² Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 442.

but what is important here is that “this proverb teaches that parents are to consecrate, discipline, and educate their children according to the Word of God in the way of wisdom, which is the way of faith and everlasting life.”³³ This proverb is critical in pointing out that parents have a God-given command to teach their children.

It also shows the impact parents can have on their children when it asserts that “even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). In a paper to the 2014 Missouri District Professional Church Workers Conference, Mart Thompson stated: “The Lord offers a comforting word to faithful parents who are tempted to doubt whether their labors in raising their children in the way of the Lord will be successful.... The Lord promises that when parents are faithful to their task that the lessons learned in the home will bear fruit later if not sooner.”³⁴ This is a great and comforting promise and does show the impact parents have on their children.

Yet, it is also true that there are children who grow up in homes where the faith is taught, leave the church, and even walk away from Christ. Steinmann holds this reality up clearly: “Does this proverb promise that every child who wanders away from faith in Christ will eventually return at some point later in life before he dies, and so be saved eternally? Many parents pray that it would be so, and God hears such prayers.”³⁵ Any faithful parent would pray that their child would return. When a child leaves the faith, it is difficult for the Christian parent, but part of the parent’s task is to continue to pray for their child that the Holy Spirit would eventually lead them back.

³³ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 442.

³⁴ William Mart Thompson, “The Vocation of Raising Children in the Faith,” (paper presented at the Fall 2014 Missouri District Professional Church Workers Conference, Osage Beach, MO. November 11, 2014).

³⁵ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 442–43.

Ephesians 6:4

This call for faith formation to be centered in the family unit is not just in the Old Testament; it is also in the New Testament. St. Paul in the letter to the Ephesians writes these words: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and in the instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Paul knows that this task of discipline and instruction falls on the parents, most notably the fathers.³⁶ He is not introducing a novel concept, as Thomas Winger notes, “this mandate is rooted in the Old Testament, which placed primary responsibility on fathers for the nurture of the children in the Word and will of God.”³⁷ Paul uses his reading and study of notable verses such as Deut. 6:4–9; 4:9–10; 6:3; Prov. 22:6 as well as the discourses from father to son in the book of Proverbs.

One cannot take this one verse from Ephesians out of the context that surrounds it. This verse is part of a *Haustafel*.³⁸ Paul is giving his readers a table of duties. He explains the relationship between husband and wife, fathers (and mothers) and children, and then masters and slaves. Obviously, for the sake of this project it is the relationship between parents and children

³⁶ Although the Greek Term *πατερες* is a masculine term that is translated “fathers,” there are several scholars that point out that Paul places the mother beside the father. “The commandment itself places the mother beside the father, and Paul himself has presented the close relationship existing between them.” R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 650. “The mothers are not mentioned, because their position has already been defined in 5:22. In virtue of their position they are included in the term ‘fathers.’” Edward T. Horn and Andrew George Voight, *Annotations on the Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, (New York: Christian Literature, 1896), 106. There are other scholars that will say that “fathers” does simply mean just that and for rightful reasons. Thomas Winger in his commentary on Ephesians says, “However, Paul may have narrowed his address for good reasons beyond simple brevity. First, as the husband is the head of the wife (Eph 5:23), he is ultimately the responsible party in the order of the household.” Thomas Winger, *Ephesians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2015), 662. Yet Winger does open his discussion by saying, “Paul turns his attention from children to ‘fathers.’ Certainly, in light of his use of ‘parents’ (6:1) and ‘your father and mother’ (6:2), this admonition could be used to include also mothers.” (Winger, *Ephesians*, 661). Both father and mother should be involved in the educating children in the faith, but the fathers have the primary responsibility.

³⁷ Winger, *Ephesians*, 679.

³⁸ “The present unit of Ephesians (5:21–6:9) is often referred to as a *Haustafel*. The term is generally attributed to Luther, through he is probably only responsible for popularizing this particular German expression. Rather than ‘table of duties,’ it is better rendered as domestic order.” Winger, *Ephesians*, 633.

that is the focus. However, one cannot dismiss the relationship between husband and wife when discussing the family unit. For Paul, marriage and family go together. Winger points out that “Marriage and family are institutions of God himself, such that Paul can allude to the creation of woman from the side of man and appeal directly to the divine institution of marriage. Therefore, it is not mere nature, but God himself who places fathers and mothers over children.”³⁹ Winger writes:

Although obedience to God’s Law in the household order entails certain earthly rewards—as indeed all created beings may enjoy the blessings placed by God into his creation—the baptized child of God seeks and finds a deeper blessing in what God has established and given. By recognizing in family life the gracious disposition of his heavenly Father, the Christian discovers that the divinely ordered family, like marriage itself, can be a vehicle of the Gospel.⁴⁰

The whole family unit is instituted by God and important for bringing the gospel to the next generation. St. Paul is clear that fathers can be instruments of the Gospel. Mothers are also instrumental in teaching the gospel as the teaching vocation of children flows through the marriage relationship between husband and wife.

Parents are instruments of the gospel because they are ones that are called to raise their children in the fear of the Lord. This is seen as Paul writes very precisely in the Greek text: *Αλλα εκτρεφετε αυτα εν παιδεια και νουθεσια κυριου*⁴¹ (but bring them up in the in discipline and instruction of the Lord.) (Eph. 6:4).

Paul knew what the Old Testament Scriptures stated regarding parents raising and teaching their children in the faith. As Paul is writing to the Ephesians the verbiage is noticeably clear what parents are supposed to do. The ESV translates *εκτρεφετε* as “bring them up.” This is

³⁹ Winger, *Ephesians*, 675.

⁴⁰ Winger, *Ephesians*, 675.

⁴¹ NA, Eph. 6:4.

acceptable writing, but a more precise definition would be “to nourish up to maturity” or “to nurture.”⁴² This is what parents are called to do, to nourish their children. What better nourishment is there than the Word of God?

The nourishment that parents are to provide is the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Παιδεια is rightfully defined as “discipline.” “Discipline” has multiple connotations including corporal punishment. However, the connotation of corporal punishment “does not appear to be its chief reference.”⁴³ The noun is double modified. It is first “accompanied by νοουθεσια which is ‘instruction’ rooted in God’s Word.”⁴⁴ The noun νοουθεσια is translated “instruction” in 1 Cor. 10:11 which states: “Now these things happened by them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction.” (1 Cor 10:11). As a means of instruction, Paul writes about various examples from the Israelite wanderings taken from the Old Testament in 1 Cor. 10. This is just one example where God’s Word is rooted in instruction. Winger goes on in his commentary, “It is ‘setting right the mind’ through teaching, reproof, or warning.”⁴⁵ Discipline is both teaching and reproof.

The noun παιδεια is double modified. The second modifier is κυριου or “of the Lord.” “Thus, the emphasis is more on the *teaching* duties of the father as a παιδευτηζ, “instructor”, who not only gives instruction from and about the Lord, and his wisdom through his Word, but does so also in his stead.”⁴⁶ Winger wraps up his discussion on this word that he defines as discipline and states, “To *discipline* is to make a *disciple*, that is to put the Lord’s *teachings* into

⁴² Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 200.

⁴³ Winger, *Ephesians*, 662.

⁴⁴ Winger, *Ephesians*, 662.

⁴⁵ Winger, *Ephesians*, 663.

⁴⁶ Winger, *Ephesians*, 663.

the child.”⁴⁷ This statement gets to the heart of what Paul is discussing here in his letter to the Ephesians on the role of the father/parents in teaching the faith to their children.

Paul’s discussion in this one short verse of fathers (parents) teaching their children the faith is critical in understanding the family-centered, church-supported paradigm. It is critical in understanding the paradigm because even more accurately fathers (parents) are discipling them as they put the Lord’s teaching into them. This one verse from Ephesians also shows that this family-centered, church-supported paradigm is indeed biblical, not just from the Old Testament, but also from the New Testament. This whole notion of the parents teaching their children the faith in order to make disciples is supported throughout the Bible.

We have looked at a mandate given by God to the Children of Israel to teach their children, there has been a discussion on Paul’s writing on how parents should be teaching their children in discipleship and the instruction of the Lord, now we are going to see how Jesus himself is supportive of parents in their teaching of the faith to their children.

Matthew 19:13-15

Just as the Proverbs and Ephesians demonstrate the importance of instructing children, so to Jesus’ actions and words support parents in their care of their children. There is a brief account of this in Matt. 19:13–15.⁴⁸ This text describes children being brought to Jesus so that He can lay hands on them and pray. The question is who was bringing the children to Jesus? Most likely, the people bringing the children to Jesus are the fathers and/or mothers. Jeff Gibbs in his commentary on these verses explains that the intention of these parents was to “bring their

⁴⁷ Winger, *Ephesians*, 663.

⁴⁸ Parallel accounts are found in Mark 10:13–16 and Luke 18:15–17.

children to Jesus for him to put his hands on them and to pray for a blessing."⁴⁹ These parents knew where to bring their children; they knew to bring their children to Jesus. Although Scripture does not clearly say who is bringing the children to Jesus, this is a reasonable assumption. This text does show us that Jesus values the discipleship of children.

As these parents are bringing their children to Jesus, His disciples are rebuking them and sending them away. His disciples saw these children as the ancient world did as “lowly in status and regarded as powerless, foolish, and (at times) unimportant.”⁵⁰ This is against what Jesus wants. Gibbs adds, “Jesus, however, sees things differently.”⁵¹ He has already told His disciples that little children are important to him. They were important to him, just as everyone is important to Jesus. With Jesus welcoming the little children and stating that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them he is saying that little children are also his disciples. Little children as disciples can be taught and should be taught about Jesus. They should not just be taught about Jesus but brought to Jesus. Parents can bring children to Jesus; they can even teach children about Jesus and the faith, but the church should never hinder them. The church needs to be a support for parents and families unlike the disciples who were rebuked by Jesus.

Here in this section of Matthew, Jesus endorses the fact that children are to be brought up in faith. Even more than endorsing, Jesus describes to the disciples and to the church today that this is what the kingdom of God is like for the disciples. Jesus reveals that the Christ is precisely for “people who are like these children—lowly, powerless, and without resources of their own.”⁵² Jesus teaches his hearers that we are all dependent on God, just like these children. Since people

⁴⁹ Jeff Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), 961.

⁵⁰ Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 961.

⁵¹ Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 961.

⁵² Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 961–62.

are dependent on God, much more so are children, and they need to be brought to Jesus. This is the nature of Scripture from the beginning to the end. This is the overarching purpose of this project, to help families at Salem Lutheran Church bring children closer to Jesus.

Doctrines—Vocation, Baptism, Priesthood of All Believers, and Law and Gospel

This Scriptural background for the task of parents teaching their children leads right into the doctrines of the church that speak directly to a family-centered, church-supported paradigm of raising children in the faith. The doctrines of the church that will be discussed are Vocation, Baptism, Priesthood of All Believers and Law and Gospel.

Vocation

Parental vocation

The scriptures are clear that one of the tasks of parents is to teach their children the faith. This is just one of the vocations that parents have. It is fitting to define a vocation: “A vocation is a ‘station which is by nature helpful to others if it be followed.’”⁵³ Gustav Wingren also provides several other definitions of vocation. “It can refer to the very proclamation of the gospel through which human beings are called to be children of God. It can also be used as meaning the work which each one does.”⁵⁴ Wingren in his book on Vocation defends Luther’s thought while using 1 Cor. 7:20 as his basis which states, “Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.” Vocation is a calling from God that benefits the neighbor. Anything that a person does that is helpful is by definition a vocation; this means that one’s vocation is not merely an individual’s occupation. With this in mind, “the life of the home, the relation between parents

⁵³ Gustav Wingren, 1957, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 4.

⁵⁴ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 1.

and children is vocation.”⁵⁵ Parenting is a vocation. It is a vocation because by being a parent, one is being helpful to his or her child. Gene Veith in a book he wrote with his daughter, Mary Moerbe, shares how helpful this vocation is:

The vocation of parenthood is very physical. It begins with our flesh and results in another mouth to feed and a body to protect. It means holding the child, soothing the child, and meeting the needs of the child. Caring for a child can be dirty, exhausting, and stressful. Changing diapers, potty training, keeping the child fed, buying clothes, tending the child through sickness, getting the child educated, driving the child to one activity after another—it is all loving and serving.⁵⁶

The vocation of being a parent is one of loving and serving. One of the most important aspects of this parenting vocation is that of education. The child needs to be educated in all aspects of life, but the most important type of education is faith education.

Martin Luther would agree that one of the most important, if not the most important duties of a parent is faith education. “Therefore, let everyone know that it is his duty,⁵⁷ on peril of losing the divine favor, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God above all things.”⁵⁸ Yes, “above all, parents must educate their children to fear and know God.”⁵⁹ Luther goes on in the Large Catechism with his language of vocation: “And if the children are talented, have them learn and study something. Then they may be hired for whatever need there is.”⁶⁰ The purpose of education is for the training of children for all vocations, but most importantly, the vocation of a Christian.

⁵⁵ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 5.

⁵⁶ Gene Edward Veith, Jr. and Mary J. Moerbe, *Family Vocation: God's Calling in Marriage, Parenting, and Childhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 116.

⁵⁷ In the Kolb-Wengert translation of the *Book of Concord* they include the word “chief.” This is a critical word, and it is especially important for this project. The chief duty of the parent is to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God. LC I:174 in Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 410.

⁵⁸ LC I:174 in Paul T. McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 378.

⁵⁹ Veith and Moerbe, *Family Vocation*, 152.

⁶⁰ LC I:174 in McCain, 378.

Parenting is indeed a great vocation, a calling given by God. It is a very high calling as Luther states in the Large Catechism, “We must therefore, impress this truth upon the young that they should think of their parents as standing in God’s place.”⁶¹ As parents are representatives for God in the lives of their children, it is necessary to repeat that the teaching of the faith is the chief duty of the parent. As parents are teaching their children in the faith, the parents see their children as believers and disciples of Jesus Christ. They see their children as Christ does in Matt. 19.

The Christian family is to be a place that teaches and practices forgiveness. Parents are called to forgive their children and children are to learn to forgive their parents and siblings.⁶² This learning includes the discussion of why forgiveness is needed. Forgiveness is needed because of sin. Part of the parental vocation is to protect their child, not just from physical danger, but also spiritual danger. Parents are to train their children morally “in the pursuit of wisdom so that when the parents are not around enforcing their rules, they will, of their own free will, with God’s grace, do what is right.”⁶³ Part of training in God’s Word is to teach the will and law of God. This happens in the moral training of children, which ultimately helps protect the child spiritually. Indeed, “Moral instruction is no longer just a matter of forcing children to comply with arbitrary-seeming rules; it becomes cultivating in them an internally motivated response to God’s grace.”⁶⁴ This is part of what it means to disciple a child in the home.

⁶¹ LC I:108 in McCain, 371.

⁶² Veith and Moerbe, *Family Vocation*, 149.

⁶³ Veith and Moerbe, *Family Vocation*, 149.

⁶⁴ Veith and Moerbe, *Family Vocation*, 151.

Pastoral Ministry Vocation

So far, I have focused on the parental vocation. There is another significant vocation when it comes to raising children in the faith, which is the Office of Holy Ministry. What is the place of the pastor and the congregation in providing faith education for the children? It has been clearly noted that the parent's chief duty is to bring up their children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord, but there are other people called to teach the faith to all ages, including children.

Part of the Pastoral Office according to the letter to the Ephesian is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). The pastor is very much involved in the teaching of children, and I would argue equipping the parents for teaching, as well. Luther when it comes to this part of the vocation of pastors says, "They should always teach the catechism."⁶⁵ Even in the Small Catechism he writes:

Therefore, I beg you all for God's sake, my dear sirs and brethren, who are pastors or preachers to devote yourselves heartily to your office. Have pity on the people who are entrusted to you and help us teach the catechism to the people, and especially to the young. And let those who of you who cannot do better take these tables and forms and impress them, word for word, on the people.⁶⁶

Luther was clear that pastors need to be a part of the education of the people, especially the young, but as was noted above, impressed it upon the parents that this is one of their chief duties as well.

The family-centered, church-supported way of teaching the faith to the young was taught by Luther. Luther does agree that parents are vitally important in faith education alongside of the church and the pastoral office. He states in the Short Preface of the Large Catechism, "Therefore, it is the duty of every father of a family to question and examine his children and servants at least

⁶⁵ LC Preface 1 in McCain, 351.

⁶⁶ SC Preface 6 in McCain, 313.

once a week and see what they know or are learning from the catechism. And if they do not know it, he should keep them learning it faithfully.”⁶⁷ Parents are to keep teaching their children until they know it faithfully.

The Catechisms are not the only places that Luther points this out. In his liturgical writings on the German Mass, he writes:

This instruction or catechization I cannot put better or more plainly than has been done from the beginning of Christendom and retained till now, i.e., in these three parts, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Our Father. These three plainly and chiefly contain exactly everything that the Christian needs to know. This instruction must be given, as long as there is no special congregation, from the pulpit at stated times or daily *as may be needed and repeated or read aloud evenings and mornings in the homes for the children and servants, in order to train them as Christians.*⁶⁸

The church and the home go together in training children to be Christians. What the child learns at church needs to be reinforced in the home. The faith education needs to be reinforced in the home because the parents are with their children far more than the children are at the church.

Baptism

Vocation is important when it comes to the paradigm shift. It highlights the calling of parents to raise their children in the faith. Baptism is also important in this shift, especially as it relates to the tasks God gives parents in their vocation. Along with teaching the faith, parents are to bring their children to the font so that they may be baptized. Baptism is a big deal; it gives new life to a sinner, at any age! St. Paul writes to the Church in Corinth: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Cor 5:17). Since Baptism is such a life-changing moment, especially when it comes to an individual’s spiritual life, it should be celebrated. The 2018

⁶⁷ LC Short Preface 4 in McCain, 313.

⁶⁸ Martin Luther, *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich Leupold and Helmut Lehmann, vol. 53, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 64. (emphasis added)

CTCR document on Baptism points this out:

Just as our birthdays are times of celebration marking the entrance of our life into this world, so Baptism marks our entrance into a new life, an eternal life in God’s promised new creation. To commemorate this event, Christian parents are often encouraged to celebrate the baptismal birthday of their children in addition to their natural birthday.⁶⁹

The CTCR is helpful in inviting Christian parents to celebrate the annual remembrance of their child’s baptism. This statement also assumes that one of the earliest tasks of Christian parents in raising their children in the Christian faith is to bring them to the waters of baptism, where they are welcomed into the family of God. In fact, the 2017 version of *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* states, “Parents should not deny Baptism to their children any more than they should deny them other vital needs.”⁷⁰ This statement reinforces the fact that one of the vital needs of children is their spiritual upbringing in the Word of God. Baptism is indeed a gift given by parents desiring to bring their children up in the faith. It addresses vital needs, namely the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Parents bringing children to the font rejoice in seeing their children blessed with these saving gifts of Christ.

Baptism is not a human act, though. It is not the act of the father, mother, or child. It is not even the act of the pastor. It is an act of God. To be clear, “to be baptized in God’s name is to be baptized not by men, but by God Himself. Therefore, although it is performed by human hands, it is still truly God’s Work.”⁷¹ Since our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to baptize and teach and this is how disciples are made through faith, it is important to recognize that it is not a human act. It is God’s work, no matter the age of the person being baptized. Baptism also includes

⁶⁹ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *An Inexpressible Treasure: The Theology and Practice of Holy Baptism*, (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2019), 10.

⁷⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 289.

⁷¹ LC IV:10 in McCain, 424.

infants as Luther asserts: “The Baptism of infants is pleasing to Christ.”⁷² God even grants these infants faith. God is the only that can grant faith to a human being. Luther writes in the Small Catechism: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts and kept me in the true faith.”⁷³ Baptism is a work of God that grants faith. It is here in the water and Word of Baptism that a human child is brought into the family of faith and is adopted to be a child of God. It is also here in Baptism that a baptized child of God becomes a priest, one that can go before God on their own, one that can call God Father. Norman Nagel shares that: “Priests are only from the Lord toward the Lord.”⁷⁴ Nagel discusses this in connection to the Old Testament priesthood and in connection with the New Testament priestly people that God calls all of us to be.

Priesthood of All Believers

In the Old Testament the priest represented the people before God. The priest was the intermediary between God and his people Israel. The high priest made the sacrifice for the people for the atonement of their sins. When the promised High Priest came in the person of Jesus Christ, there was no longer a need for priests to be a type of salvific go-between from God to his people.

When discussing the New Testament “there is only one priest. All other talks of priests is in the secondary sense.”⁷⁵ The secondary sense refers to the people whom the Lord calls to

⁷² LC IV:48 in McCain, 428.

⁷³ SC: Third Article in McCain 330.

⁷⁴ Norman Nagel, “Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61, no. 4, (October 1997): 279.

⁷⁵ Nagel, “Luther and the Priesthood,” 280.

himself. Christians are called to be members of the Lord's priesthood in this sense through Baptism. The New Testament expands on the role of "secondary priests" especially as it relates to 1 Peter 2:9 where Peter writes: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." This teaching is a major contributing factor to Luther emphasizing the Priesthood of All Believers and its responsibilities before God and one another. Baptized believers have a responsibility before God and before our neighbor. Nagel shares that "we are living sacrifices whose lives are poured out in sacrifice to him where he has put himself to receive the sacrifice of our lives, that is our neighbor in need."⁷⁶ Those neighbors include children who need to be taught the Word of God.

Since a Christian parent is also a baptized child of God, he or she is part of the Priesthood of All Believers. Note that "baptism has prominence here because it is by Baptism that priests are made."⁷⁷ This priesthood indicates how God's people can spread the Word of God. Most notably for this project, it relates to how the parents can teach the Word of God to their children.

When Luther discussed the notion of the Priesthood of All Believers, he was facing the Roman Catholic Church that taught a spiritual estate and a temporal estate. The spiritual estate meant the clergy and the temporal estate was everyone else. Luther maintained that there was only one estate. Luther writes this in "To the Christian Nobility":

It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the temporal estate. This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimidated by it, and for this reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Nagel, "Luther and the Priesthood," 280.

⁷⁷ Nagel, "Luther and the Priesthood," 288.

⁷⁸ Martin Luther, "To the Christian Nobility" in *The Christian in Society* I. ed. James Atkinson and Helmut T.

Luther is pointing out that there is no difference within the Priesthood of All Believers except that of office, which means that the Pastoral Office is called out of the Priesthood of All Believers. The Pastoral Office is just one vocation in the Priesthood of All Believers. Cyril Eastwood adds to this fact: “The ordained priesthood is a necessity and is God’s gift to the Church through the Church. The minister is first and foremost a member of the universal priesthood; his calling is confirmed by the congregation and charged with special duties.”⁷⁹ Both Luther and Eastwood here share that there are not two distinct estates in the kingdom of God, but only one. This is the universal priesthood.

As Luther worked with God’s Word and saw what was occurring in the Church during his time, he was upset that the Word of God was not in the hands of the lay people. Luther himself worked to correct this and brought the Word of God and teaching tools into their lives. He writes in the Preface to the Small Catechism, “Dear God, what great misery I beheld! The common person, especially in the villages has no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine.”⁸⁰ He goes on and urges pastors to teach the saints in their congregations the true doctrine. Luther realizes that there is a need for tools to do this, so he provides a simple way in the form of the Small Catechism. In doing so, he focuses on the spiritual leaders of the house. Luther writes at the beginning of each of the Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism, “As the Head of the Family Should Teach Them in a Simple Way to His Household.”⁸¹ Luther understood that parents were very influential in teaching the faith to their children.

Lehmann, vol. 44, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 127.

⁷⁹ Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962), 46.

⁸⁰ SC Preface, 2 in McCain, 313.

⁸¹ SC I in McCain, 316. This is also found as noted in the text above at the beginning of the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar.

Luther not only noted the importance of parents in teaching the faith to their children in the Small Catechism but reemphasized it in the Large Catechism. At the end of the Large Catechism he writes, “Therefore, let every father of a family know that it is his duty, by God’s order and command, to teach these things to his children, or to have the children learn what they ought to know.”⁸² Luther again focuses on the spiritual leaders of the house as he addresses the father here in the Large Catechism. The theological work and writings by Martin Luther therefore support the proposed paradigm shift to a Family-Centered, Church-Supported way of educating children in the faith.

As has been discussed, the family and the church work together in bringing up children in the faith. It is important to note that “neither institution is eligible to forego its part in teaching the faith to succeeding generations.”⁸³ This importance is critical in understanding the paradigm shift biblically and theologically. The Church and her leaders, including pastors, make disciples through baptizing and teaching God’s Word. They also need to support and equip parents for this all-important task of raising the children in the faith.

Law and Gospel

Another vital doctrine to this paradigm is Law and Gospel in the family. Practicing Law and Gospel is critical to the parent/child relationship. Applying Law and Gospel in parenting begins with the parent. They must remember that they too are a child of God, and it is through the law that guides them and the gospel that motivates them that they are able to raise their children in the Christian faith. Then, when the parent remembers who he or she is as a child of God, the Christian parent can look at his or her own child as a child of God as well. *The*

⁸² LC V:87 in McCain, 440.

⁸³ Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 34.

Lutheran Study Bible provides a brief article on “Law and Gospel Parenting”, and it states:

Parenting begins with parents remembering that they live in God’s kingdom ruled by God’s lavish love in Christ. The Gospel is the basis for parenting, not some how-to book with a list of rules. God’s undeserved love in Christ reminds parents that having a child is not a right but a blessing. Parents do not merely produce children (as an industry produces a product). They are entrusted with a child as a gift from God. All parenting flows from this gift of the heavenly father.⁸⁴

Godly parenting flows straight from the gospel message that Jesus Christ is crucified and risen from the dead.

This message points to the fact that Christ died for the sins of the world, which will help parents realize that they and their children are sinners who need a Savior. “Children need clear rules and consistent discipline appropriate to their sin. They need parents who follow through on the consequences.”⁸⁵ Children need to be held accountable; they need the law in their life.

Children also need to hear that their sins are forgiven when they acknowledge their sin and repent. Children need to hear the words “I forgive you,” so much more than they need to hear “that’s okay,” because sin is never okay.

Parents can model this Law and Gospel living in their own life as they acknowledge the sins that they have committed against their children and seek forgiveness from their children, this can begin early on so that there is that constant application of law and gospel in the life of the family. Instead of just teaching the law and giving punishments and consequence, give children a generous amount of the Gospel, for that is what it makes for long lasting change. In Chapter Three, the reader will see how evangelical authors Turansky and Miller and even Tripp talk about changing hearts and applying Gospel principles, the real heart change does not happen because the law is applied, the real heart change comes from the Gospel being lavished upon

⁸⁴ Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed. *The Lutheran Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 2025.

⁸⁵ Engelbrecht, *Lutheran Study Bible*, 2025.

them. The Gospel is what motivates change for both the Christian parent and his or her child who are both children of God.

Historical Context–Martin Luther and the Paradigm Shift

This paradigm shift has been introduced biblically and theologically around the doctrines of Vocation, Baptism, the Priesthood of All Believers and Law and Gospel. As noted above, Luther was an important person in church history whose writings can be used to advocate for this family-centered approach to raising the children in the faith. But is that consistent across the board in his writings on this topic? In Luther’s treatise to the councilmen in the cities in Germany, he encourages parents to be faith educators but then he writes: “What if the parents fail to do their duty? Who then is to do it?”⁸⁶ Luther gives three reasons why parents fail in this duty: “In the first place, there are some who lack the goodness and decency to do it, even if they had the ability.”⁸⁷ Secondly, asserts Luther, “the great majority of parents are wholly unfit for this task. They do not know how children should be brought up and taught, for they themselves have learned nothing but how to care for their bellies.”⁸⁸ Thirdly, even those who wish to and are able “have neither the time nor the opportunity for it, in light of their other duties and the care of the household.”⁸⁹ These are very real reasons for the church to take an invested interest. In Luther’s day he was encouraging the government of a Christian land to take up this responsibility. Today, one could say it is the congregation’s responsibility to teach children the faith.

⁸⁶ Hans J. Hellerbrand, ed. *The Annotated Luther: Christian Life in the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 5:254.

⁸⁷ Hellerbrand, *Annotated Luther*, 5:254.

⁸⁸ Hellerbrand, *Annotated Luther*, 5:254.

⁸⁹ Hellerbrand, *Annotated Luther*, 5:254.

Thompson suggests that in practice “Luther’s Words [in the Catechisms] on focusing on parents are often not heeded.”⁹⁰ He points out how the church has often, if unintentionally, taken this responsibility of raising children away from parents. He writes

When a child is born, he is brought to the waters of Holy Baptism. Parents and sponsors promise to teach the 10 Commandments, Creed and Lord’s Prayer; to put the Scriptures in the child’s hands when old enough to read; and to bring them to the services of God’s house.

Perhaps cradle roll materials are sent to the home. The parents may teach bedtime prayers before meals but that is frequently all of the “God talk” that takes place, other than to say one should go to church. When the child gets old enough, the parent begins dropping the child off at Sunday school where a volunteer Sunday school teacher teaches Bible stories and lesson to the children.

If it’s available, the parents may choose to put their child in a Lutheran school where parochial school teachers teach Bible stories and doctrine to the children.

When they are confirmation age, the parent then drops the child at catechism class and the pastor teaches the child Christian doctrine.

Next they try to involve them in youth group where they do fun things with other children from the church.

Along the way there is also VBS and perhaps a national youth gathering and a servant event or two. And we call that raising children in the faith.⁹¹

This pattern of activity is the typical scenario in the church. This is what is called raising the children in the faith and the church has operated this way for many years. This is even how I grew up.

There is something missing in the way the typical congregation operates when it comes to nurturing children in the faith. What’s missing? The parents. They are often missing the tasks of raising their children in the faith. For this work, they seem to be just taxi drivers, like they are for soccer, football, or any other activity. It has been the tradition handed down to us. As Thompson

⁹⁰ Thompson, “Vocation of Raising Children.”

⁹¹ Thompson, “Vocation of Raising Children.”

notes, “It’s considered the pastor’s job or the DCE’s job or some other representative of the congregation’s job to teach the faith to the children. We hope that parents support the work of catechesis, but the work is centered in the congregation. It is ‘farmed out’ to the so-called experts.”⁹² In attempting to meet the perceived needs, the church has overstepped the role of parents in the faith-life of their children. This goes against the very God-given vocation of parents because “all authority flows and is born from the authority of parents.”⁹³ However, when a parent utilizes the church for assisting the faith learning in the child, then the authority still sits with the parents.

As will be shown in the next chapter, recent history shows that a church-centered approach does not work. It can cost the lives of children and the so-called professionals. Children leave the church after confirmation, and even today are often not coming back to be married or have their children baptized. Freudenberg in his book admits this when he talks about his first call as a youth minister: “We had very little parental support, so we took over the parents’ role. And we burned out big time—especially after we had our own kids. It pains me to say that when we left Shore Haven, many of the kids dropped out of the church. I didn’t know what I’d done wrong, but I knew it was bad.”⁹⁴ Doing ministry this way is not effective and it highlights that parental involvement is especially important.

Conclusion

A family-centered, church-supported paradigm for raising children in the faith resonates with the Scriptural mandate for parents to teach their children the faith. This paradigm is also

⁹² Thompson, “Vocation of Raising Children.”

⁹³ LC I 141 in McCain, 375.

⁹⁴ Freudenberg and Lawrence, *Family-Friendly Church*, 18.

reflected in the biblical theology of Martin Luther, especially in his development of the Doctrine of Vocation and the Priesthood of All Believers. I believe this approach answers the age-old question: “How do you get the youth involved in the church?” Answer: “By getting the parents actively involved in the child’s faith life and in the life of the congregation.” Another answer is, “By parents teaching their child the faith.” Finally, “By churches equipping parents and giving them tools to teach their children the faith.”

The biblical witness, the doctrines of the church, and the historical evidence all confirm that the church must return to the biblical family-centered approach. Recently, several in the church have begun to see this and a grass-roots movement has begun. It is a movement to get the church back to the biblical approach of teaching children the faith. This Scriptural basis, as presented in this chapter, has given me the encouragement to continue with this project, which has the goal to equip the parents, families, and leaders of Salem Lutheran Church to support the family-centered and church-supported paradigm of raising children in the faith.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF RECENT RESEARCH

In the last twenty-five to thirty years, many in the church have shown an interest in helping the family to become more central to the faith formation of children. This is partially due to leaders determining why the church is losing so many young people to its membership. It is also a growing interest in returning to the message of the Scriptures that the family is central to the upbringing of children in the faith. In Chapter One I showed how there is problem with the church and the family not being in a fuller partnership in raising children in the faith. The second chapter provided a brief survey on the scriptural basis for parents being called to teach the faith to their children. I then walked through several doctrines of the church. The doctrines that were discussed support the biblical teaching that parents are central in making disciples out of their children. In Chapter Three I will look at recent literature in several areas: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the resources provided by Concordia Publishing House¹ and evangelical authors who have written such books as *Visionary Parenting*, *Parenting*, and *Parenting is Heart Work*.² I will also consider resources written by James K. A. Smith which speak of formative “cultural liturgies” that impact the faith development of children. I will conclude by showing how Attachment Theory relates to this discussion.

The current literature sheds light on the topic of faith formation of children. It provides the material, along with Chapter Two, for writing the Bible study series. It will help answer the question: “Does a Bible study series on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm help

¹ Concordia Publishing House is mentioned since it is the publishing arm of the LCMS.

² See Rob Rienow and Amy Rienow, *Visionary Parenting: Capture a God-Sized Mission for Your Family* (Nashville: Randall House, 2009); Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: The 14 Gospel Principles that Can Radically Change Your Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016); and Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, *Parenting Is Heart Work* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2006).

equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith?” Because of its applicability to parents and churches, it will be important to share the information from the review of current literature in the Bible Study Series. It will help the participants see that there are others engaged in this shift to a paradigm that is clearly taught in the bible.

Originality

In considering the research question, it may seem that this is not an original topic. Increasingly in recent years authors have been writing about this topic, and it is increasing in popularity in churches. Authors, scholars, and pastors are going back to the Scriptures and seeing a family-centered, church-supported paradigm in raising children in the Christian faith. Yet, how does this teaching is received and is applied in a specific local congregation is the focus here. That is where the originality lies. This MAP is a study of one particular congregation, Salem Lutheran Church of Barron, Wisconsin. Its originality lies in the uniqueness of this congregation.

Each of these resources discussed below in the literature reviews are just pieces of the pie. Parents can read these books and put the pieces together, but many will need support in doing so. It is important to enlighten them on why these resources are important and how they function in supporting the paradigm shift. Providing these lessons for parents is just one way that the church can be involved in partnering with the parents. The first group of resources below will show that the Church needs to be different than it has been in recent years. Ben Freudenberg was onto something twenty-five years ago when he wrote:

Denominational leaders asked me to write about the role of parents in youth ministry as part of a thirteen-week leadership training course called “Lead On.” In my segment, I compared a youth ministry without parent participation to a tent with a missing pole—it’s just a matter of time before the thing collapses. It was a blow to me when my denomination’s youth office rejected my vision. “That won’t work,” they said, “because kids don’t want their parents around at youth group.” They

wanted to tweak my material to limit parent's involvement to what I considered shallow responsibilities—taxi drivers, cooks and cash machines.³

The church of yesterday typically operated with this thinking. This was the exact imprint of the church in which I grew up. I was dropped off at Sunday School after the Divine Service. I was dropped off for Vacation Bible School. I was dropped off for Youth Group on Wednesdays. In all of this, there was little parental involvement. Typically, the only parental involvement in any of these areas was to chaperone the youth nights and youth events, and the church staff taught the kids. These were the practices that went with a church-centered paradigm. Many children and youth grew up in churches where parents were, by the established practice, not being encouraged to be actively teach the faith to their children. My story was just one of many. This has been the church's practice—not just at Salem, but really at any church.

There is reason to believe that in a number of congregations and homes the approach to faith formation in children is starting to turn around. But it is still not standard practice everywhere. There are numerous churches, leaders, and parents that are using a church-centered approach. Long-time standing behaviors and thought patterns are slow in changing. The teaching of the shift needs to take place amongst the parents and leadership of the church will need to be persistent and over time. This includes the biblical, doctrinal, and current literature on the paradigm shift. Change in people's thoughts or behavior do not take shape overnight.

Therefore, the research question—"Does a Bible study series on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith?"—seeks a unique approach that relates to the current make-up of Salem Lutheran Church. It also looks towards the future with a new childcare center and its potential to

³ Freudenburg and Lawrence, *Family Friendly Church*, 19.

impact families beyond the pew.

What ultimately makes this project unique is bringing the Scriptures, doctrines, and their practical application together and putting this into the hands of God's people in a specific parish and assessing the impact. This topic is very much focused on teaching the Scriptures. After all, it is the Word of God that changes hearts, not my words, another present-day author's, or even a set of present day statistics.

Law and Gospel and the importance of it in the family was unpacked above in Chapter Two but does impact the originality of the MAP. Many of the evangelical authors and even the authors that represent the LCMS do not focus on Law and Gospel in their writing. This small piece of the MAP can also benefit the greater church.

Literature Review

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)

Some members of the LCMS have begun to understand that parents are vital in the discipleship-making process of their children. One of those members is Ben Freudenberg, who is a member of the LCMS and has been a professor at one of the LCMS' Concordia Universities. He helped to reignite interest through his early work on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm of raising children in the faith. While serving as a Director of Christian Education in his early career serving parishes, Freudenberg saw the problem of a church-centered approach. He took note of that and wanted to make a change. He wrote his book *Family Friendly Church* almost twenty-five years ago, but it is classic in the world of this changing paradigm. His book explains the process of the change and gives congregations and church leadership thoughts and encouragement to do this. He writes: "The church must be ready to train and support parents and

the home to be the primary nurturers of kids' faith."⁴ He asserts, that this is what the church must do. The church has failed to do this well. As a pastor I can see that I have operated with the false idea that kids do not need their parents at church functions. I was wrong in buying into this false idea. Parents are important and kids do need their parents involved in their faith life, even at church functions. Freudenberg clearly points this out:

Parents are the key faith developers for their children—they can have either a positive or negative impact on their kids' faith growth. But either way, they'll have the biggest impact. You can have strong faith-shaping programs for kids at church, but if you're not partnering with homes, you risk producing kids who have weak faith.⁵

The church needs to be partnering with the homes, the families, and the parents of the children entrusted into their care. The local church is not the main instrument in raising children in the faith. The home is. Is it appropriate for the congregation to have strong faith-shaping programs? Absolutely, in fact, the church is called to make disciples. However, the church cannot forget the parents. The church really should not just be teaching the children but be active in teaching the parents the faith and how to teach that faith to their own children.

As the church has begun observing this Scripturally motivated move toward the paradigm shift, in recent years the publishing arm of the LCMS has provided great and wonderful tools to the church. Many of their resources now agree with the paradigm shift.

This includes the work of David Reuter, who wrote *Teaching the Faith at Home: What Does This mean? How is This Done?*⁶ In this resource to the church and to parents, he agrees that the church in recent history has “failed to equip them with the resources needed to walk through

⁴ Freudenberg and Lawrence, *Family Friendly Church*, 74.

⁵ Freudenberg and Lawrence, *Family Friendly Church*, 77.

⁶ In this book he does not just write to church leaders, he writes to parents. In the last chapters of the book he writes specifically to parents and gives them tools on how to teach the basics of the Christian faith. This is an incredible gift to the church that can be used in equipping parents to teach the faith, but not only that, also continuing to catechize parents and children alike.

the Scripture with their children.”⁷ It is more than just this though; it is also that “far too many parents are not equipped well enough to understand the basics of the faith in order to take on that instruction.”⁸ Reuter here is discussing the Confirmation Ministry, which is traditionally the formal teaching of the Catechism to Middle School students by pastors or other church workers. However, this is also a lifelong issue in the life of the child and the parent. Parents need better support and catechesis themselves to properly teach their children.

Reuter has shown that there is an issue of parents not being well-equipped enough to take on the instruction but he has also pointed out that there is a solution. It is to equip and teach the parents in our pews. Reuter is clear in this: “Parents need training in order to grow confident enough to take their God-given roles of spiritual leadership.”⁹ As has been stated this is not neglecting the church’s role in discipling the children, too. The church is responsible and so are the parents.

The church and her leaders need be intentional when it comes to discipling the whole family—not just children, but also the parents. This whole family approach or the family-centered, church-supported paradigm begins early, as “the church must walk alongside parents from the time they first become parents.”¹⁰ Starting at that point or even before they become parents during pre-marriage counseling can “help parents feel comfortable discussing matters of faith”¹¹ with their children. In the early days of marriage and family the foundation is then laid for the family-centered, church-supported paradigm.

⁷ Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 98.

⁸ Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 98.

⁹ Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 102.

¹⁰ Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 103.

¹¹ Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 103.

Starting at an early age with equipping parents is important, because “when the church and home echo one another in how the faith is taught and lived, the impact grows exponentially.”¹² Parents have the greatest influence in the life of the child, so parents and the church need to be together as a team. Parents need to be supported by the church to fulfill their vocation to teach their children.

While Reuter’s book specifically focuses on teaching the faith and the methods to do so, Dr. John Eckrich’s work displays how faith formation fits into the overall picture of family wellness. Eckrich wrote *Family Wellness: Raising Resilient, Christ-Centered Children*¹³ from the viewpoint of a medical doctor. There are a large number of pages written on the nutritional and physical health of raising children, which is important to the full wellness of the child. However, Eckrich does not forget what is most important, “Parents’ primary role is to love and care for their children, provide for their physical needs, and teach them about God’s love and continuous care for them.”¹⁴ Parents need to provide for the physical needs of their children, but Eckrich also emphasizes providing for their spiritual needs, as well. Both physical and spiritual well-being are crucial to a child’s overall wellness.

Eckrich also recognizes the importance of the team approach to discipling children. “Faith leaders, along with parents, have the responsibility to teach their children to fear God ... who

¹² Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 131.

¹³ Eckrich is another one that also writes to parents directly towards the end of his book as he is providing tools to parents in raising their children. This is different than Reuter’s book whose focus is teaching the faith. Eckrich’s purpose is Raising Resilient Children with the Wellness wheel. At the end of his book Dr. Eckrich goes in depth on nutrition, rest, and other important physical needs at all ages of childhood, but he also does not neglect the importance of faith development in the family. This is one of those resources that also needs to be given to parents and taught through.

¹⁴ John D.Eckrich, MD, *Family Wellness: Raising Resilient Christ-Purposed Children* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2020), 23 .

unconditionally loves them and created them in His image.”¹⁵ While Eckrich’s overall assertion is true, for our purposes I would move parents to the head of the list of those responsible to teach the faith to their children. It is parents who have the primary role in teaching, much as they have the primary role of making sure their children are fed and nourished in their physical needs. Since part of this parenting vocation is to make sure children are fed and nourished physically, it is also true that another primary task is to make sure they are fed and nourished spiritually.

Another way in which Eckrich emphasizes the spiritual leadership and nurturing of children is by example they set and direction they give: “Again, your children will observe the ways you express the purpose and direction of your own journey as a follower of Christ. Take every opportunity to show, by word and deed, how you live out your faith and the Christian love instilled in your heart as you care for God’s people and all of God’s Children.”¹⁶ He does not just stop at teaching through observation but also in actively in raising them to live the Christian life. He describes the home as “the incubator for instilling and encouraging humble, compassionate servanthood.”¹⁷ In essence, Eckrich would agree that parents are primary in not just the role of providing for physical needs, but also in spiritual needs. Eckrich builds on Freudenberg in his work as he points out that “the family has primary responsibility for nurturing the faith of the child, and the church provides support and training for the parents and their children through, Word, Sacrament, and educational ministry.”¹⁸ Eckrich’s assertions further demonstrate that among leaders and teachers in the LCMS that the need for the family-centered paradigm is increasingly valued.

¹⁵ Eckrich, *Family Wellness*, 24.

¹⁶ Eckrich, *Family Wellness*, 43.

¹⁷ Eckrich, *Family Wellness*, 49.

¹⁸ Eckrich, *Family Wellness*, 108.

These are just two of the growing number of resources that the LCMS is providing for both church leaders as well as parents. Most recently, *Lutheran Hour Ministries* (LHM), an auxiliary of the LCMS, partnered with Barna Research in researching the importance that family has in impacting the faith of those in the home. LHM and Barna have produced two resources. The first is the actual research presentation entitled *Households of Faith*, and the second is what could be considered the narrative of the project. This joint effort has shown that faith in the home is important and critical for discipleship. It is noted that “the household is the ideal place for us to work out our Christian discipleship.”¹⁹ Don Everts employs the research from *Households of Faith* and provides practical tools in encouraging households to be discipleship centers. He does not focus on just parents and children, but the entire household. He does point out that “it is meaningful that during the Reformation catechisms were written to be used for faith formation within the household.”²⁰ This connects back to the notion that parents are very important in forming the faith of their children. These resources from LHM and Barna are not merely tools for churches and faith leaders but for the very families that make up the Body of Christ.

Evangelical Community

It is not just the Lutherans in the LCMS that have come to see that parents are quite important in raising their children in the Christian Faith. In fact, the grassroots movement of the paradigm shift that Ben Freudenberg was influential in introducing to the church was not limited to the Lutheran context. Several notable church leaders, including Dr. Rob Rienow, Mark Holmen, Dr. Scott Turansky, and Paul Tripp, in the evangelical community saw that this

¹⁹ Don Everts, *The Spiritually Vibrant Home: The Power of Messy Prayers, Loud Tables, and Open Doors* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 23.

²⁰ Everts, *Spiritually Vibrant Home*, 83.

paradigm shift was important in the life of the church as well as in the life of families.

This section will focus on these four authors and their work which added greatly to the paradigm shift. To begin with, each of these authors focuses on parents. Up to this point, my focus has been on the need for congregations to shift to a family-centered and church-supported paradigm. These authors are providing resources to families being challenged to live out this approach at home. They provide very practical tools to the church and to her parents for raising children in the Christian faith in the home.

Mark Holmen shares with his readers of *Faith Begins at Home* that, “Many parents today are searching for help.”²¹ Yet too often, parents are not searching for help in the most important places. They seek it in schools, sports, the latest Google search, or even the latest parental help book. They typically do not look to the church for help, let alone the Almighty God. As parents when we are seeking help, Holmen writes, “I wonder if we realize that God is there for us. He desires that our families not just survive, but also thrive as we journey through life.”²² There is help for the family. There is help for parents, and it comes from God.

Holmen points out that “many families don’t recognize the local church as a resource to help them with their family relationships.”²³ This is very much a problem. Holmen continues to point out that they “will turn to TV and radio shrinks, the Internet, counseling and even medication to help them as a family. But the church isn’t even a blip on the radar.”²⁴ This shows that so many people will turn elsewhere. There is another obvious but often forgotten piece to parents forgetting about the church as a resource and that is that “Satan knows that the Christian

²¹ Mark Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home: The Family Makeover with Christ at the Center* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2005), 9.

²² Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 10.

²³ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 118.

²⁴ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 118–19.

Church is one of the most valuable resources families need in order to succeed.”²⁵ Satan uses the above-mentioned TV and radio shrinks, internet, counselors and medication as tools to get families away from the church. He also tempts them with the use of their time and the business that can come from that. Holmen shares that “one of the tools he uses is to keep families so busy that they don’t have time for church. And quite simply, when you don’t have time for church, you can’t establish a lasting partnership with the church.”²⁶ There are many tools that Satan uses to divide the family from the church, which ultimately causes them to not realize that the church is there to help.

Holmen points out that “a makeover needs to happen in our homes,”²⁷ especially in the homes of Christians.²⁸ Makeovers²⁹ happen all the time in the homes of families. These makeovers happen as families choose to whom they listen: the world and all the fractures that come from the world or the Word of God and what God has to say for family life. This makeover is important, and it is the makeover that begins with faith at home.

Faith at home does not just mean that families attend church, for the reality is that “we may go to church, but we don’t bring home the most important thing we need: faith.”³⁰ We may go to church, but not bring home our faith. Many leave their faith at the church door and do not even discuss it in their homes. Remember, “we pass on things to our children every day. They’re

²⁵ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 118.

²⁶ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 118.

²⁷ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 19.

²⁸ It is true that the homes of non-Christians need a makeover as well. This is a place where the church can be an outreach, but for the sake of this MAP, the focus is on the homes of the people that make-up of Salem Lutheran Church and then into the larger church.

²⁹ The term *makeover* was made popular by such television shows such as *Extreme Makeover Home Edition*. In this show you would see a physical makeover of a family home. Holmen comments: While the makeover of the physical structure of the home is amazing, I believe that most families need a much a deeper makeover—one that changes how they live, play, and behave.” Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 19.

³⁰ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 40.

watching us, learning from us and emulating us. The question is not *are* we passing things on to our children, but *what* are we passing on to children.”³¹ This is true. Children watch their parents; they learn from their parents. What children learn is important. What families say and do at home is important. Christian parents need to be asking the question of “what are we passing on to children” by the way we live and does it reflect faith in Jesus Christ.

Parents play a key role in passing on the faith to the next generation. Holmen in his book takes us back to where this MAP began in Chapter Two, the Scriptures, most notably Deut. 6. He points out the word “impress” in his translation of Deut. 6:7, “The word ‘impress’ refers to a faith that sticks. It means constantly showing and instilling in your children an unwavering faith that will be with them their entire lives.”³² That is what Moses is telling the Children of Israel: teach them constantly. Holmen continues to press this point, “These verses simply say to talk about faith with your children—to make ‘faith-talk’ a part of your everyday vocabulary.”³³ These faith conversations or “faith-talk” for parents need to become second nature. Yet many parents do not know how to do it, which brings us back to the very fact that churches need to be standing alongside of the parents to teach them how to do this. Congregations need to help the home so that talking about the faith is not seen as something unknown or scary.

In addition to Holmen, another author that understands that parents have great influence on the faith formation of their children is Rob Rienow, along with his wife Amy. They give the church another very helpful set of resources for aiding parents in their own personal walks with God and for teaching them the vocation they have as parents. As most writers on this topic, he begins with Deut. 6. He points out that we are called to love God. He goes on to say that “our

³¹ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 41.

³² Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 71.

³³ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 72.

most important parenting mission is to lead our children to salvation by God’s grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.”³⁴ This mission comes straight from Scripture as one impresses God’s love on their children.

The home, the family has a vitally important purpose from God. That purpose is to share God’s love from one generation to the next. The family is to be a “discipleship center.”³⁵ Rienow makes it clear that the home “is the primary environment where faith and character are formed and shaped.”³⁶ He also points out the cruel reality that is true even of the homes of many Christian families. “Many families today are recreation centers, activity centers, wealth-building centers, television centers, and anger centers.”³⁷

Families have priorities. Rienow points out the difficult truth that in many homes, the priorities of the family are in the wrong place. When priorities are in the wrong place, children see that. Those often become their priorities, as well. Rienow dedicates a whole chapter in his book to this very topic as he encourages his readers, many of whom he assumes are parents, to look at their calendars. He points this out in a very real way as he says,

We are now at the point that if our ten-year old makes the travel soccer team, everything else in life takes a backseat, including church. We make it to church when we can; if it fits the schedule. My point here is not that missing the church is the worst thing in the world. Rather, my concern is that if *every time* sports and church collide on your calendar sports wins, then the schedule you have chosen is teaching your children that you value their bodies more than their souls.³⁸

Priorities of parents are taught to their children and then those priorities become the priorities of their children. This is just another example of how parents have great influence over their

³⁴ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 7.

³⁵ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 9.

³⁶ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 9.

³⁷ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 9.

³⁸ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 40.

children and their faith life. Every child will have a faith life, the question is where that faith is placed. Is it placed in God Almighty or is it placed in sports, academics, or some other place? This call for parents to look at their family calendars is a needed exercise and will point out where one's time is dedicated. When parents look at their schedule and see that the Christian faith is not incorporated daily, their children see this. Children will also see when "a godly lifestyle, prayer, and Scriptures" are "woven through your daily routines."³⁹ Children are observant of everything.

In addition to encouraging parent to evaluate their priorities, Rienow assists them in refocusing their priorities by discussing the vocations of both father and mother. Rienow draws on Eph. 6:4 to describe aspects of that vocation. He takes the word that is translated as "discipline" in the ESV and translates it as "training." In essence when it comes to discipline there is some training involved. In training there is also practice. He calls specifically on fathers to "practice spiritual life with our children."⁴⁰ Examples follow as to how fathers can do this:

We are to pray *with* our children. We are to read the Bible *with* our children. We are to worship in church *with* our children. We are to serve our neighbors *with* our children. Whenever we do spiritual activities with our children we are 'bringing them up in the training of the Lord.'⁴¹

This does not just mean that fathers lead with spiritual action, but they also need to be leading with spiritual communication.⁴² Children do not just learn by observation. They also need to be taught verbally. Part of this parenting vocation is that "God calls us to make every effort to live

³⁹ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 38.

⁴⁰ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 73.

⁴¹ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 73.

⁴² Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 73.

right with our kids *and* to talk right with our kids.”⁴³ Raising children in the fear of the Lord is based on both what parents do and how parents speak.

Rob Rienow discusses fathers because that is what Eph. 6:4 says as was discussed in Chapter Two. However, mothers are just as important as fathers in raising their children in the Christian faith. There is an argument to place mothers alongside of fathers in the discipline and instruction in the Lord, while remembering that the father is the spiritual head of the house and the primary faith builder in the home.⁴⁴ Another vocation of the father is to provide for his family, which will take the father outside of the home. The mother, the wife of her husband, is then called on to help her husband, the father of her children. Amy Rienow in the chapter that she wrote on motherhood says, “Out of all God’s creation, you can help your husband in a way that no one can.”⁴⁵ Wives are called by God to help their husbands and one of the greatest ways a wife can help her husband is to help with the raising of their children in the faith, through action and word as they teach their children.

Like many of these resources that authors have given to the church in the parent-centered, church-supported paradigm of raising children in the faith, the Rienows provide powerful tools for parents and families to utilize in their home. Some of these tools, such as the signs of God-filled daily life, will be included in an appendix that is given out in the Bible Study Series.⁴⁶

Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller in their book *Parenting is Heart Work* provide more resources for families in nurturing children in the faith. Their book helps explore the critical

⁴³ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 73.

⁴⁴ See fn 36 in Chapter Two.

⁴⁵ Amy Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 87.

⁴⁶ Tools from each of the main books mentioned will be offered to those present in the Bible study series to help increase faith building in the home. This is a way to show how the church is supporting her parents in teaching the children the faith.

connection of the parent and the child especially with the child's heart. As has been noted above, parents are central for their children in what they learn. Parents also want what is best for their children. The best, as has been discussed, is that their children would live for eternity with Jesus.

As parents know, children are sinners, just like the parents. Obviously, parents cannot ultimately control their children, but parents do have an impact on how their children live out their lives, even spiritually. Turansky and Miller agree that "parents are teachers."⁴⁷ It is one of the most important jobs parents have, they note that "when parents are intentional about teaching, they can better guide their children's hearts."⁴⁸ The more intentional parents are at teaching in the homes, the better they guide the hearts of their children. Parents teach quite a bit, and oftentimes "children learn more than we realize,"⁴⁹ even things parents may not want their children to learn from them.

Since parents are teachers and children learn from them, then parents need to be involved in the faith education of their children. Turansky and Miller understand that "spirituality isn't just a Sunday morning experience"⁵⁰ or even Wednesday afternoon or any other time that faith is taught in the church building. They note that "children learn from parents what faith looks like each day as little pressures, irritations, and responsibilities challenge their peace and joy."⁵¹ Children learn from their parents how faith affects their parents in their daily lives. The unfortunate reality is that how a parent reacts to a situation can negatively affect the faith of their child, since children are constantly observing their parents and faith is being taught regardless of

⁴⁷ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting Is Heart Work*, 138.

⁴⁸ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting Is Heart Work*, 138.

⁴⁹ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting Is Heart Work*, 139.

⁵⁰ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting Is Heart Work*, 167.

⁵¹ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting is Heart Work*, 167.

whether it is verbal. This negative reality is one of the realities that happens in families when the parents are not involved in faith education and the church is the only place they receive their formal and verbal faith instruction.

Turansky and Miller give practical tools to parents for raising children in the faith. Number one is to “study God’s Word yourself” while “looking for applications for family life.”⁵² When parents are reading and studying God’s Word, they are better able to teach God’s Word to their children. The second practical tool that Turansky and Miller provide is to tell children Bible stories, especially in exciting ways. As parents read the Bible, they become more familiar with the stories in them. Number three should seem obvious, but for many parents it is not, and that is to take their kids to church. When parents take their children to church, they teach them that this is an important part of their faith life, for “God’s church is the vehicle he’s chosen to pass on the salvation message to a hurting world.”⁵³ God did design his church to be the place where the message is passed, but it also overlaps and supports another institution that God created and that is the home. The church needs to properly catechize parents themselves, because they have the vocational task to bring that salvation message to children as well. The church is the place where we receive the Lord’s gifts; it is the place where people come for comfort and hope; it is where we receive the Lord’s teachings, as it rightly should be. Parents should not take the place of the church, just as the church should not take the place of parents. Parents and the church overlap when it comes to the faith education of the children, as the church supports the parents and families and assists them in teaching their children.

As Turansky and Miller continue to discuss the importance of bringing children to church,

⁵² Turansky and Miller, *Parenting Is Heart Work*, 169.

⁵³ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting is Heart Work*, 171.

it is noted that parents are to

Teach children that being a part of God's family is a privilege. As your children build relationships with other Christian adults, they'll hear the same kinds of things from them that you're trying to teach at home.⁵⁴

Turnasky and Miller point out how being a part of God's family is a privilege. But more than that, being part of God's family is a gracious gift. It is a gift that is given in Baptism. Children are adopted into God's family through this great gift of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. It is important for parents to teach that being part of God's family is a saving gift, the privilege of being part of it is given by Jesus. Included in the blessing of children being in the church, as these authors point to here, is they build relationships with other Christian adults, like their pastors, Sunday school teachers, and other trusted Christian adults, but again while realizing these people do not take the place of parents but they are blessings to children and support the work of that parents are doing in the home.

Another tool that Turansky and Miller suggest is to memorize the Scriptures. Memorization of Scripture is important, for it "gets the verse into your head, but that's often the first step in getting it to the heart."⁵⁵ Memorizing together with children shows them that the parent takes this task seriously as well. A parent then can model how memorization affects their faith life and conversations.

As parents this, they also can show the practicality of the Scriptures in their daily life. This can happen as parents dialogue with their children about the Bible. Parents can show how the Bible applies to their daily lives. This can help parents teach their children that "God's Word isn't just a book" but that it is "alive and has the ability to reach deep within us" and even "make

⁵⁴ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting is Heart Work*, 171.

⁵⁵ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting is Heart Work*, 171.

needed changes.”⁵⁶ Parents dialoging with their children in each area of life helps them fulfill their God-given vocation to teach their children by following the Biblical example given in Deuteronomy to always talk about the Word with their children.

The final author, I will discuss regarding resources for families taking up the challenge to teach faith in the home is Paul David Tripp. He, in likeness to Turansky and Miller, discusses radical change in the lives of families in his book, *Parenting*. He focuses on the radical change that comes through the gospel in pointing out that parents need to rely on God to help them parent with grace. Tripp opens this book with a solid principle on the vocation of parenthood: “Nothing is more important in your life than being one of God’s tools to form a human being.”⁵⁷ One of God’s tools is what a parent is—a tool in shaping a child’s life. Being a tool means that one has a job, a job to shape. As a parent, one has a very specific task, to raise their children to be God-fearing in all that they think, do, and speak. This is part of the parenting vocation, which Tripp explains well. Tripp refers to the description of parenting in Deut. 6:4–9 and 6:20–23 as he writes:

Your work as a parent is a thing of extreme value because God has designed that you would be a principal, consistent, and faithful tool in his hands for the purpose of creating *God-consciousness* and *God-submission* in your children. You can’t create this yourself, only God can, but you have been appointed to be an irreplaceable tool in his powerful hands. You see, at the core of what God designed human beings to be is the acknowledgment of his existence and the surrender to authority. Those are the things that he meant to rule the heart of everyone who ever lived. Your kids will never be what they’re supposed to be or do if they lack God-consciousness. It is the essential thing that must be developed in the heart of every child, and the passages above say that that task was assigned by God to parents.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Turansky and Miller, *Parenting is Heart Work*, 173.

⁵⁷ Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: The 14 Gospel Principles that can Radically Change Your Family*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 21.

⁵⁸ Tripp, *Parenting*, 30.

It is clear scripturally, therefore, that parents are given the task to teach their children the faith.

There is also another truth that Tripp brings home that supports the paradigm shift we are discussing. He writes “Your church was never designed to replace you, but to assist and equip you for this essential work.”⁵⁹ This supports the paradigm shift in the very fact that the Church is there to assist, support, equip and stand side-by-side with parents in this God-given task to parents “to raise children who approach everything in their lives as disciples of Jesus.”⁶⁰ Children and parents are disciples of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus are constantly learning from Jesus in His Word, which is done in both the church and the home.

In the home, Tripp emphasizes the use of the particular tool that God has given his people for teaching about Jesus, noting “the Bible is your primary tool.”⁶¹ God’s Word is where He teaches both parents and children alike how they are to live in all of life, not just in the home and the church. Parents are uniquely put in the position to be educators in the faith, so that that faith will saturate the life of their children. This saturation affects the whole of life.

They learn about the danger of sin and the rescue of God’s grace, they learn how to fight temptation, and they learn what is right and wrong. In Scripture they are taught God’s plan for their bodies, their minds, their relationship, their money and possessions, their sexuality, their relationship to authorities, and much more. But most of all they are confronted with the radical truth of a God of glorious love who sent his Son to provide rescue because we could not rescue ourselves.⁶²

This is how God’s Word can permeate the lives of children when parents are fulfilling their vocation as teachers of the faith. They are practicing both Law and Gospel, Confession and

⁵⁹ Tripp, *Parenting*, 30.

⁶⁰ Tripp, *Parenting*, 184.

⁶¹ Tripp, *Parenting*, 205.

⁶² Tripp, *Parenting*, 205–06.

Absolution when they put this into practice. When families practice this together, not only do children grow up having faith and trusting their Lord Jesus Christ, but they also grow up to be responsible citizens, friends, classmates, and workers. Therefore, it is very important that parents understand and then act on their God-given tasks of raising their children in the Christian faith.

Tripp, Turansky and Miller, the Rienows, and Holmen all point out the importance of parents raising children in the Christian faith. They would also agree that the Church does not take the responsibility away from parents in this vital task. These authors share the belief that God's Holy Word demonstrates that it is parents who are the primary educators of the faith for their children and that the church is their support in this task. The Church supports parents by equipping parents, and even by providing further education for their children. Parents and the church are in this task of bringing Christ to their children together so that children can grow up to lead godly lives here in time and into eternity.

James K. A. Smith: Cultural Liturgies

The authors observed thus far have stressed the need to teach God's Word to children in raising them in the faith. We will see in the writings of James K. A. Smith that this teaching should not be targeting the head alone; it should be targeting the whole of the body, including the heart. I will begin to illustrate this approach to education, or "formation," by reflecting on my own experience in being formed to be a pastor.

In my work at the Master of Divinity level, the term "formation" was frequently used at the seminary. My classmates and I were said to being formed to be pastors. Our formation was not just with the head knowledge of systematic, exegetical, practical, and historical courses, it was the whole of life seminary experience, which included residential field education at local congregations and then in other congregations during our internships, known as our vicarage

year. There were also other opportunities to learn, including daily chapel services and even on the intramural field. My Master's level education was to form me to be the pastor that God was calling me to be and giving me the tools to use in the field.

This experience at face value may not appear to have much to offer parents, but in reality, it does. The connection is with the emphasis on formation. The professors at the seminary were called to form us to be pastors, and God calls parents to form their children into disciples. This is a type of education does not just target the head but the whole body, including the heart. This is what Smith writes about in his book, *Desiring the Kingdom*, "If education is primarily *formation*—and more specifically, the formation of our desires—then that means education is happening all over the place (for good or ill)."⁶³ This statement from Smith points out that education is happening everywhere, not just in the classroom or even in the home, but in all the world. It will be shown below that such formation is addressed to the whole person—in our case, the whole child—in daily life.

Parents are unique since they are typically around their children more so than anyone else so they have the biggest impact on the formation of their children, with formation being the "task of shaping and creating a certain kind of people."⁶⁴ The certain kind of person that a Christian parent is forming is a child of God.

To bring out this understanding of formation, Smith defines education that is formational when he writes: "An education, then, is a constellation of practices, rituals, and routines, that inculcates a particular vision of the good life by inscribing or infusing that vision into the heart

⁶³ James K. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 19.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 26.

(the gut) by means of material, embodied practices.”⁶⁵ Mart Thompson points to this statement in very clear language, “What [Smith] is saying in short, is that ritual and story form people’s hopes and desires.”⁶⁶ Rituals form the hopes and desires of individuals. Therefore, the daily routines and life in the home, along with the conversations between parents and children are all educational, that is, formational.

Therefore, when parents are teaching their children, they should not just be focusing on head knowledge, but on the whole person. Parents should be teaching their children the head knowledge of the Christian faith. But how they impact their children in other ways may teach something far different by how they live and prioritize their families’ and children’s lives.⁶⁷ For example, parents could very well prioritize their child’s sports on Sundays or the practice on Wednesday nights over worship and Christian education classes at church. Such parents, even when they are teaching the head knowledge of the Christian faith are not matching it with how they live. In essence, the head knowledge does not match what the heart is being taught. In reality, the heart is being taught to value and even love something ahead of Christ.

Smith calls humans “*liturgical animals* because we are fundamentally desiring creatures.”⁶⁸ He says, “We are what we love, and our love is shaped, primed, and aimed by our liturgical practices that take hold of our gut and aim our heart to certain ends.”⁶⁹ It is really what we do that takes hold of our whole person. Education and training for the kingdom of God needs to be more than just imparting head knowledge, it needs to touch each aspect of the child’s life, including

⁶⁵ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 26.

⁶⁶ Thompson, “Vocation of Raising Children.”

⁶⁷ Rob Rienow offers insights to priorities as shared above.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 40.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 40.

the heart.

Smith's thesis applies to all humans, including children. One can see this in observing a child pursuing what he or she loves. In another one of his books, Smith focuses on this very topic. He makes this clear in *You are What You Love* as he says:

If you are what you love, and your ultimate loves are formed and aimed by your immersion in practices and cultural rituals, then such practices fundamentally shape who you are. At stake here is your very identity, your fundamental allegiances, your core convictions, and passions that center both your self-understanding and your way of life. In other words, this contest of cultural practices is a competition for your hearts—the center of the human person designed for God...More precisely, at stake in the formation of your loves is your religious and spiritual identity, which is manifested not only in what you think or what you believe but in what you do—and what practices do *to* you.⁷⁰

With the cultural rituals or liturgies⁷¹ competing against the Christian “liturgy” for the heart, ultimately what is at stake is a Christian's spiritual identity and eternal destination. When parents follow their hearts and take their children to their athletic event over church, they are showing what is more important to them. They are following what they love.

Smith appeals to Martin Luther to point this out as he connects cultural practices, liturgy and the worship of one's ‘god.’ He writes, “To say ‘you are what you love’ is synonymous with saying, ‘you are what you *worship*.’ The great Reformer Martin Luther once said, ‘Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your god.’ We become what we worship because we worship what we love.”⁷² When parents orient their families toward actions and ultimate priorities that do not reflect faith in Christ, they are forming their child to trust in a

⁷⁰ James K. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 15.

⁷¹ “Cultural liturgies” are the basis of what forms individuals. Smith writes that “liturgies—whether “sacred” or “secular”—shape and constitute our identities by forming the most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world. In short, liturgies make us certain kinds of people, and what defines us is what we love.” Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25. He goes on to explain in a footnote on what he means by liturgy, and he uses the term *liturgy* as a synonym for *worship*.

⁷² Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 23.

different god than the true God.

Parents are spiritually forming their children whether they realize it or not by what they are doing. Smith in *Desiring the Kingdom* reinforces the notion of formative liturgical practices in the secular world and points out that the secular liturgies are being used to take people away from the true God. Smith writes:

‘Secular’ liturgies are fundamentally formative, and implicit in them is a vision of the kingdom that needs to be discerned and evaluated. From the perspective of Christian faith, these secular liturgies will often constitute a mis-formation of our desires—aiming our heart away from the Creator to some aspects of the creation as if it were God. Secular liturgies capture our hearts by capturing our imaginations and drawing us into ritual practices that ‘teach’ us to love something very different from the Kingdom of God.⁷³

There are many and various secular liturgies that are forming and drawing people away from the true God. For example, Smith in *Desiring the Kingdom*, introduces this phenomenon of secular liturgies by explaining how the mall is an example of a secular liturgy. He shares how the mall can be a place of worship beginning with the sea of color in the parking lots. Drawing your attention then to the mass of people that he defines as pilgrims arrive at this hospitable location to participate in the rituals on the inside. These rituals include offering and meals. The mall also thinks about the banners and the architectures to draw people to it. This is just a sample of what Smith does with the mall as a secular liturgy.

Another example of a secular liturgy that speaks more loudly to people today is the liturgy of professional sports (or even sports at any level). If one has ever been to a professional sporting event there is a lot that goes into it. There is a building where the game takes place that has been planned out specifically to draw people to it. People dress in special clothing for this special occasion. There are chants and songs. In many ways, whether it be the stadium, the clothing, the

⁷³ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88.

chants, songs, or even the décor and even food, it can feel like you are in a worship setting.

Parents need to recognize what their actions and words are teaching. They need to recognize that in all of life they are forming their sons and daughters *for* something, that life is oriented toward a certain end or goal. Parents, according to Smith's work, are liturgists in their homes. They are leading their children in the liturgies that are important to them and thereby forming their children toward what they see as important. Parents are either 'teaching' their children to love the Kingdom of God and everything about it or they are 'teaching' their children to love something else. They are teaching their children to fear, love, and trust in something.

As Smith discusses in his writings, education is not just about forming through intellectual exercises, it is also formation through your habits. This is also true in the homes of God's people. God's people "might have Bible verses on the wall in every room of the house and yet the unspoken rituals reinforce self-centeredness rather than sacrifice."⁷⁴ There are rituals and habits that happen in every home that are affecting the hearts of children. Smith suggests that "each household and family does well to take an audit of its daily routines, looking at them through a liturgical lens. What Story is carried in those rhythms?"⁷⁵ This is needed to see what is affecting the hearts and minds of parents and children in the home. As this audit is taking place it is important to keep in mind what needs to be in place in the Christian home, which Smith says is that "they are caught up in the wider household of God."⁷⁶ Smith goes on to show how this works by saying: "the liturgies of our homes should grow out of, and amplify, the formation liturgy of Word and Table."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 127.

⁷⁵ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 128.

⁷⁶ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 128.

⁷⁷ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 128.

Smith in his book *You are What You Love* encourages parents and households to use the liturgical practices in the home. He provides several solid examples of how this works in the home and what the church can do to assist. The Church Year is an easy way for families to connect the liturgy at Church to the home. Smith also points to the practicality of a baptism candle to connect the baptism done in the church to the baptized life of the believer in the home.⁷⁸

This work by Smith provides parents and church leaders much to think about when it comes to how we raise children. As the church partners with and supports parents in raising children in the Christian Faith, it can be reevaluating its educational practices so that there is more of a connection between church and the home. In doing this the Church needs to recognize that teaching the faith is not just an intellectual exercise but is truly, “a constellation of practices, rituals, and routines, that inculcates a particular vision of the good life,”⁷⁹ namely, faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory has insights for how parents and children relate. Attachments between parents and children can have an impact on their life of faith. In this final section of the literature review, the reader will see how being attached to the parent is important not just in everyday life, but also in the child’s faith life. When parents and children are attached, parents will have a greater impact on the ethical and moral, and, even spiritual growth of their children.

Drs. Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Maté explore the importance of children being attached to

⁷⁸In the appendix there is a list of ideas that are given out at the Bible Study for parents and families to use in their homes to connect the liturgy of the Church to the liturgical practices at home.

⁷⁹ Smith. *Desiring the Kingdom*, 26.

their parents in their bestseller *Hold on to Your Kids*. The thesis of the book argues that parents need to matter more than their peers. While this assertion is true, this book will not be employed in that way here in this project. It will be used to describe how much influence parents have on their children or do not have on their children. This book shows clearly that society and culture are not on the side of parents when it comes to raising children. This can be very harmful to children, especially in their faith life. This has already been noted with the work of James K. A. Smith regarding competing cultural liturgies.

Attachment “gives the universe its shape.”⁸⁰ This is a basic description of attachment according to this psychological theory. The notion of attachment giving the universe its shape focuses on two differing objects coming towards each other. Drs. Neufeld and Maté write: “In the psychological realm, attachment is at the heart of relationships and of social functioning.”⁸¹ Attachment is at the heart of what we do and who we are. The COVID-19 Pandemic has challenged our attachments and has shown that “we are creatures of attachment.”⁸² During this Pandemic many have struggled with not being able to connect with others outside of their homes in the way they were accustomed. Children were not attached to their peers like they once were, even adults were not attached like they once were either. Humanity has been about attachment since God first created man. Adam knew that he needed to be attached to someone and in naming the creatures did not find a helpmeet, so God created Eve out of his rib. Adam was then attached to Eve, as well as to God.

When sin entered the world, the attachments that God created become negatively impacted

⁸⁰ Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*, (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2013), 16.

⁸¹ Neufeld and Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids*, 16–17.

⁸² Neufeld and Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids*, 17.

by sin. Today, this is noticeably clear when it comes to that of the attachments children have with parents. Culture is changing. Who today has the greatest influence on children? It is noticeable that in many cases it is not parents. There are many reasons that this is happening, including such things as being attached to technology (both parents and children), both parents working outside the home, and the amount of time children spend away from home. The psychological world sees this as a problem.

The psychological attachment patterns make clear “that children were meant to revolve around their parents.”⁸³ While both psychology and the church agree on the importance of attachment, the church has an answer regarding the source of this human need. It is the result of God’s design for the family as revealed in the biblical creation account.⁸⁴ The need for attachment comes early on from infancy. These “parent-child relationships are the foundation for children’s social relationships and sense of self.”⁸⁵ These relationships are also a foundation for the child’s growth in faith.

Both research and personal experience indicated that there are notable breaks in attachment when it comes to parents and children. As Neufeld and Maté point out, “our children are rudely jilting us for their peers.”⁸⁶ Children are jilting their attachment to their parents for peers and others. As already noted, the culture encourages the attachments of children to others instead of the natural attachment of children to their parents.

Interestingly, even though this is not a religious work, Neufeld and Maté use Jesus as an example to show that there is an incompatibility of competing attachments:

⁸³ Neufeld and Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids*, 19.

⁸⁴ Gen. 2:18–24.

⁸⁵ Rob Palkovitz, “Expanding Our Focus From Father Involvement to Father–Child Relationship Quality,” *Journal of Family Theory and Review* 4, no 11, (2019): 580.

⁸⁶ Neufeld and Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids*, 28.

Jesus captured the incompatibility of competing attachments and, too, the bipolar nature of attachment when he said, ‘No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and the love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the others’ (Matthew 6:24). When the loyalty is to the peers it will not feel right for the child to be on our side or to do our bidding. Children are not disloyal to us on purpose; they are simply following their instincts—instincts that have become subverted for reasons beyond their control.⁸⁷

This statement shows a bigger problem as well. It shows that it is not just children who have an attachment problem, it is also parents and other adults. The attachment problem is that every human by nature is sinful and are not attached to Christ and his church as one ought to be. Culture and society, along with the economics, are pulling apart relationships of people with many competing factors – peers and even rituals and habits.

One example of this came from the economic realities since World War II where “children are placed early, sometimes soon after birth, in situations where they spend much of the day in one another’s company. Most of their contact is with other children, not with the significant adults in their lives.”⁸⁸ Children are missing their attachment to parents at a very young age, and it significantly impacts them. Parents are an influencer of their children and when they are not in the place to influence them, children will seek out and be drawn to other influencers, such as their own friends.

Neufeld and Maté point out another attachment void. This one involves faith communities:

Another attachment void has been created by the secularization of society. Quite apart from religion, the church, temple, mosque, or synagogue community functioned as an important supporting cast for parents and an attachment village for children. Secularization has meant more than the loss of faith or spiritual rootedness; it has brought the loss of this attachment community. Beyond that, peer interaction has become a priority for many churches. For example, many churches divide the family as they enter the door, grouping members by age rather than by family. There are nurseries and teen

⁸⁷ Neufeld and Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids*, 29–30.

⁸⁸ Neufeld and Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids*, 32–33.

groups, junior churches, and even senior classes. To those unaware of the importance of attachment and dangers posed by peer orientation, it seems only self-evident that people belong with those their own age. Large religious organizations have evolved to deal with only the youth or the young adult, inadvertently promoting the loss of multi-generational connections.⁸⁹

Secularization has often taken children and parents away from the community of faith. Yet even when they are still engaged with churches, these institutions have often responded by offering more peer offerings and thus assisting in disrupting the attachment of children and parents.

Parents and children may suffer from well-intentioned church programs that pull them apart. Such activities that do not involve parental participation with their children, make it difficult at church for parents to pass on their Christian faith to their children. When children and parents are not attached, children lose their natural compass point. Children lose their natural location for safety when threatened with stress. Attachment is important to the health of the child's physical, emotional, and most importantly spiritual health. Neufeld and Maté state: "What protects the child from experiencing the brunt of all this stress is an attachment with a parent. It is attachment that matters: as long as the child is not attached to those who belittle him, there is relatively little damage done ... when the parent is the compass point, it is the messages that he or she gives that are relevant."⁹⁰ Neufeld and Maté are showing the importance of attachment between child and parent here when it comes to stresses. Attachment matters, and when parents are the ones children are attached to they are the compass point. Those messages, no matter what they are, matter. These messages are also the clear educational formation of a child in the faith. Attachment also matters when it comes to raising children in the faith. When godly parents and children are attached, the passing of morals and of spiritual and religious

⁸⁹ Neufeld and Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids*, 36.

⁹⁰ Neufeld and Maté, *Hold on to Your Kids*, 99–100.

beliefs only increase. Parents need to be working to stay attached to their children to influence them with Christ and His message.

The Church also needs to let the parents do the work of parenting their children. The Church needs to partner with and provide the support and tools for the parents to raise their children in the Christian Faith. Being helpful, the church can assist in this attachment by providing ways for parents and children to be together in the Word, whether it is at home or even in the Church building in a guided exercise.

Conclusion

The review of literature related to the Family-Centered, Church-Supported paradigm shows that it is being taught more consistently in the church. Even the secular literature which focused on the Attachment Theory indicates the importance that parents have on their children in their life. This literature helped show the significance of parents being faith educators in their homes, while the church stands beside them, supports them, and equips them.

Therefore, we can see that this family-centered, church-supported approach to raising children in the faith is biblical, it is doctrinal, it is also found in the supporting literature of the church, as well as secular writings, such as Attachment theory. As shown above in Chapter Two, this approach works increasingly well when—in daily life—the law is applied in the family, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ predominates in the lives of children and parents. After all, the Gospel gives lasting heart change, because it is not what the parents are doing, it is what God is doing in the hearts of both child and parent.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The first three chapters have provided the background and foundation for this project. The first chapter introduces the research problem and shares the idea that parents need to be better equipped for raising their children in the faith. In Chapter Two, a solid theological basis was laid out for the reason that the home needs to be the center for discipling children. This theological basis is built off the scriptures and the doctrines of the Church. The third chapter shared the current research that is being done on the topic of the family-centered, church-supported paradigm for raising children in the faith. This was done through looking at various works of church literature and one theory from the field of psychology that explains the importance of parents being attached to their children.

Here in Chapter Four, I systematically share the approach that helped me find the answer to my research question: “Does a Bible Study Series on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith?” In the first part of the chapter, I narrate the design of the research, including the population sampling and the implementation. In the second part of the chapter, I share the methodology that I used and close with the timeline of what transpired.

Research Design

In the MAP the basic research design was to invite the congregation to come to a Bible-study series on the topic of shifting to a family-centered, church-supported approach to faith formation of children at Salem Lutheran Church. I decided on the Bible Study series so that it would be easier to hold a conversation with those receiving the instruction. Each of these Bible studies is incorporated in the appendices of the MAP. When it comes to the research design, I

will discuss how the population sampling came to be and then will share how the research was developed.

Population Sampling

In order for the project to come to completion I needed to think of the population with whom I was going to interact. Since I am a pastor at Salem Lutheran Church in Barron, WI, I knew that my population would be from them. Therefore, the population sampling was purposive in nature. I was not seeking out a random selection of individuals for my sample. It was purposive since I was interviewing and collecting survey responses from the members of Salem Lutheran Church, Barron, WI. In my sample, I was seeking parents, congregation leaders, and others that have a desire to understand the paradigm shift. I did not limit my research, except by the State of Wisconsin's definition of a legal adult as 18 years of age or older.

Since I did both surveys and interviews in my research, the surveys were able to be done by anyone that was over 18 years of age and participated in all five Bible study sessions. In the interviews, my intention was to interview four to six parents with children in the fourth grade or younger. However, during the Bible study series I knew that this was not going to be possible, since the parents of children in this age category were not part of the Bible Study Series. This occurred for several reasons including being one of the last groups to come back after the COVID-19 shut-downs. This group is also not very active in Bible classes. Therefore, I amended the population sampling for the interview to include parents or guardians with children at home or congregational leaders. In the end my population sample included two grandparents and two parents. Several of these people are also elected church leaders, so their insights are valuable for that reason, as well.

Implementation

In this portion of the chapter, I will share general information of how this project was implemented. Later on in the chapter, the project will be shared in greater detail when it comes to specific dates and efforts of how this project developed.

In the Spring and Summer of 2020, I participated in my final course in preparation for writing my MAP project, throughout the Project and Research Writing Course, with consultation with my advisor, my instructor, and my classmates, my project changed to where it is today—finding out if a Bible study series on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm for raising children in the faith would help equip Salem and her members to enact this way of raising children in the faith. Upon completion of the course, I submitted my MAP proposal as well as my IRB application in the Fall of 2020. I received approval of both the MAP and the IRB later in the Fall of 2020.

As the Bible Study phase was beginning to be rolled out, I included an article in the March 2021 newsletter, as well as some graphics. I also informed the congregation that I would be working with Zoom and an online format for collecting survey data through a series of emails to the congregation. The graphics and newsletter article are included in the appendix.

It was during the Research and Writing course as well as the development of the MAP proposal that I decided on the methodological approach and the research methods that would help develop the project.

Methodological Approach

There are several different methodologies for doing research at the doctoral level, even when researching one's own congregation. For example, an individual could use the four tasks of pastoral theology as a methodological approach. After reviewing several of these methodologies,

action research seemed to work the best. Herr and Anderson in their book on action research define it this way:

Action research is inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to* or *on* them. It is a reflective process, but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that it is deliberately and systematically undertaken and generally requires that some form of evidence be presented to support assertions.¹

Understanding what action research actually is showed me that the research that I was doing was being done with the members of Salem Lutheran Church. I simply could not sit back and do research on this group of people without taking into account that I was one of them. I was an insider in a number of ways by being both a parent and being a member of the church. Yet, at the same time I was an outsider in the sense that I am the pastor of Salem Lutheran Church.

This MAP is designed not only to help me as the pastor grow professionally but also to help with some organizational change at Salem Lutheran Church when it comes to the Paradigm Shift. As I seek to grow professionally, there is also the desire for organizational transformation. This description shows itself on the action research continuum as “insider in collaboration with other insiders.”² Herr and Anderson define insider researchers as those who “often collaborate with other insiders as a way to do research that not only might have a greater impact on the setting, but also has the potential to be more democratic.”³ Even though I am working collaboratively with the congregation, I am also the sole researcher when it comes to doing the actual research; there are no leadership groups or study groups when it comes to this project.

Research Methodology

¹ Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson, *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2015), 3.

² Herr and Anderson, *Action Research Dissertation*, 45.

³ Herr and Anderson, *Action Research Dissertation*, 45.

As has already been noted above, I planned to do both quantitative (surveys) research and qualitative (interviews) research. This is a mixed-method approach. This seemed to be the best situation for my MAP. I could get a larger amount of information from a larger sampling of people. In the quantitative approach, I used the closed-ended question approach. In doing so I provided the various answers that they could choose from. I also took a holistic approach and made sure that all the parts of the question were “sending a clear and consistent message to the respondent.”⁴ In this quantitative portion of the research, I sought out demographic information such as age, gender, whether they were a parent or not and the ages of their children, and whether they were an elected leader or a general member. I also asked specific questions relating to the thought of faith leadership in the home. In this quantitative approach I gave them the same survey both before and after the Bible Study Series.

In the qualitative approach, I used the Phenomenological approach for the interviews. This type of interview according to Irving Seidman, “focuses on the experiences of participants and the meaning they make of the experience.”⁵ I encouraged them to share their experiences in raising children in the Christian faith regarding how they approached it before the Bible Study Series and then how they see themselves incorporating the information after the series. Since this Bible study is aimed at beginning to produce change within families and the congregation it was important for me to dive deeper into the experiences of a portion of the parenting and leadership population at Salem.

⁴ Don Dillman, Jolene Smyth, and Leah Christian, *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, 4th ed. (Hoboken NJ: Wiley, 2014).

⁵ Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 4th Ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2013), 16.

Assumptions, Limitations and Role of Researcher

When it comes to this MAP, there were some general assumptions that I made. I assumed that not many people fully understand the topic of “vocation” as it relates to the entirety of life. In connection to this assumption, I assumed that the participants believed that they want what is best for their children and many did not fully grasp what is actually “best” for them. I assumed that as God’s children, they trust the Bible to be true and that the Bible can change hearts. Building off the fact that these are God’s people, I assumed they would be honest with me, the researcher, during the time that we spent understanding what it means to have a family-centered, church-supported paradigm for raising children in the faith. A final ongoing assumption is that this project is not finished after the Bible Study Series, the interview, or even the degree is earned. This project will continue to shape the way that I equip the members of Salem.

I had wanted this project to impact more families than it ended up doing. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, closing the church doors for public worship, and ceasing most day-to-day operations, it has been difficult to bring back the families with younger children.⁶ This limited the scope of my study when it came to an important quantitative and qualitative research target sample. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. The other notable limitation that I had during this project was that Salem is a congregation that traditionally has not had a lot of members who regularly attend Bible Study. Prior to the Pandemic, it seemed reasonable to assume that for a special initiative with extensive promotion (which I did), that there would be an increase in attendance for a short-term Bible study series of this nature. But again, the Pandemic seems to have had an impact in that people, who might otherwise have taken an initiative to

⁶ In my opinion, it has been difficult to bring back the families with younger children, since they have grown accustomed to their misplaced priorities

participate in this series, were not comfortable doing so.

Being a parent and a pastor who is already committed to raising children in the Christian faith beginning in the home was another limitation in my role as the researcher. I am deeply passionate about the importance of discipling children in the home and needed to keep an open mind for working with others who do not (yet) share this conviction. One thing that helped me with my own limitations as the researcher was to write down my thoughts about this before beginning any of the qualitative interviews.

Implementation Timeline

Knowing the assumptions, limitations, and my role as the researcher, I embarked on teaching what I had learned in Chapters Two and Three of this MAP. Before the teaching began, I wrote a newsletter article and placed it in the March newsletter explaining what the Sunday Morning Bible Study would be following Easter. In this newsletter article, I shared how there would be two surveys for those attending my Bible study if they agreed to participate, as well as interviews following its conclusion. Included in the same newsletter were some Powerpoint slides that shared the title of the project along with a general outline of the Bible studies. I emailed this information through our church email to members. I also edited a page on our church website to include information and the recordings of the Bible Study Series.

Realizing that COVID-19 and the aftereffects might impact attendance I was seeking out ways to incorporate more people into the class and the study. I created a SurveyMonkey survey which included all the necessary IRB information. I emailed that to the congregation, as well as a Zoom invite that indicated we would be automatically recording the Bible study sessions.

Writing Chapters Two and Three guided me in how I would teach the material and relate the development of the paradigm shift occurring in the church—in the LCMS and among

representative Evangelical authors. Studying the Scriptures and various doctrines of the Church continued to impact me and my belief that the family-centered, church-supported paradigm is the preferred way to raise children in the faith. While working with these chapters, it was natural to break down my Bible study into five sessions. These sessions included an introduction to the paradigm, Old Testament evidence for the shift, New Testament evidence for the shift, doctrinal evidence for the shift, and then two sessions looking at the recent literature on the paradigm shift. In the final session, I also gave them tools for making the shift. In my MAP proposal I suggested that I might provide a session on how this paradigm could look at Salem Lutheran Church. However, after the first few classes, I decided that there would not be time for this to take place.

After sharing my intentions with the Board of Elders and the Board of Education, along with the congregation in the newsletter article, we commenced with the Bible study on April 18, 2021. This was delayed one week from the original start date of April 11, 2021, due to a congregational voters' meeting. On April 18, 2021, a small group of eight⁷ of us embarked on the journey learning about the paradigm shift. Before we began the study, I went through the IRB consent form and they participated by filling out an initial survey. In this study we looked at the introductory material, including the mission of Salem Lutheran Church and the Biblical Mission of Matthew 28. I defined the Old Paradigm which is the Church-Centered, Family-Supported Paradigm and then the New Paradigm which is the Family-Centered, Church-Supported Paradigm. Following these Paradigm definitions, I shifted the conversation to the Old Testament Scriptures, and we looked at Deuteronomy 4 and 6, devoting most of the time to Deut. 6:4–9. I then guided the class on a discussion of Ps. 78:4–6 and the book of Proverbs, especially Prov. 22:6.

⁷ There were four more participants that watched the recorded versions posted to YouTube.

On April 25, 2021, the class convened again and we discussed the New Testament support for the Family-Centered Paradigm. A specific passage that I guided the class through was Eph. 5:22–6:9 with a detailed look at 6:1–4. Following the discussion of this letter from St. Paul to the Church in Ephesus we discussed Matthew 19:13–15 and how Jesus views children as being among his disciples, as well.

May 2, 2021, brought us to the third class on the Paradigm Shift. and during this session, our studies moved from a direct focus on the Scriptures, while still keeping them as our guiding principle, to a look at various doctrines of the Church. This part of the study included the doctrines of Vocation (for both parent and pastor), Baptism, and the Priesthood of all Believers.⁸

Following a one week break for a family matter, we picked up with looking at the recent research in literature, notably in the LCMS, among Evangelical authors, James K. A. Smith's work on Cultural Liturgies, and Attachment Theory. During the session on May 16, 2021, I took the class through various works written by LCMS Lutherans, works published by Concordia Publishing House, and others developed through Lutheran Hour Ministries. After looking at these various resources that the church is providing for parents and church leaders, I began the discussion on the primary authors in the Evangelical world including Mark Holmen and Rob Rienow.

We then took another one-week break from our study since the majority of those in attendance had children, grandchildren, or were impacted directly by Confirmation Sunday on May 23. We then reconvened on May 30 to wrap up our study. This included finishing the discussion on the works by Evangelical authors, including Scott Turansky and Paul Tripp.

⁸ The doctrine of Law and Gospel and its application in parenting, also covered in Chapter Two, was taught later in the Bible study series on May 30.

Following this discussion, I introduced the topic of Cultural Liturgies in James K. A. Smith's works as described in Chapter Three of this MAP. I ended with a discussion on Attachment Theory from the field of psychology and then concluded with a brief review of the literature and offered some remarks on proper application of the doctrine of Law and Gospel in the parenting vocation. In this final session I also provided several tools from a couple of the books that I discussed in the Bible studies. After the completion of this fifth study, I handed out an identical survey of what they took at the beginning of the Bible study.

Following the conclusion of these Bible studies I sent out another email with another SurveyMonkey link for a follow up survey which included the same questions as at the beginning of the study. I asked them to complete the surveys by June 13 so that I could begin compiling the data. Upon completion of each week in the Bible study I emailed out the link to the uploaded Bible study which I placed on YouTube and on Salem's Family Ministry website. In addition, all of these Bible studies, the newsletter article, advertisements, and links to the recorded class videos are in the appendices of this MAP.

As I already mentioned above, during the course of the Study I realized that my target audience largely did not attend, so I contacted both my Advisor, Dr. Mart Thompson and the Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Dr. Mark Rockenbach to explain the issue that had developed; I then wrote an addendum to the IRB regarding who I would like to interview which included anybody—parent, grandparent, or guardian—that has children at home, or is an elected church leader.

Upon the approval of this change I began recruiting members that attended the Bible class for all five sessions for my interviews. I did these interviews on June 16 and 17, 2021. During these interviews I wanted to know what changed from the beginning to the end of the Bible

Study Series. I began with the question: Before this Bible Study Series, you may not have been as aware of incorporating the Christian faith in the home. Now, looking back, can you tell me how you were perhaps applying some of these lessons in your home, whether or not you realized it at the time? From there, I transitioned the interview to the experience of the Bible class and a major takeaway from the Bible study.

There were several other pieces that I wanted to understand from these participants, including how they planned on implementing what they learned at home and then how they perceive Salem moving ahead with this paradigm shift. Nearing the conclusion of the interview I asked this general open-ended question: “Is there anything else you have not told me that you would like, about raising your child in the faith?” I thanked each participant for their time and their involvement in my study.

Immediately after each interview, I saved the file to my iPhone which was password-protected and then wrote down initial observations, including my emotions. This would be useful for interpreting the data of the transcripts later. I also uploaded them to my computer which is also password protected to have transcribed at a later date.

After reviewing several transcription services that are available, I chose the *dictate* option on Microsoft Word to transcribe the interviews. This was helpful since I was again listening to the interviews and taking notes this time as I was listening. After listening to the interviews once I then went back and compared the interviews with the transcripts to make sure that they were reliable for the study.

During the course of the interview review process, I listened to them several times and made notes on them. I also searched for common themes in each of the interviews. I then took time to develop these themes into more theological language which will be discussed more fully

in the next chapter, Chapter Five.

Conclusion

In this chapter I shared the step-by-step process that I took in carrying out the project. I described each of the Bible study sessions and how I developed those studies. I then discussed how I arrived at my population sampling with both the qualitative and quantitative research. It was in the course of the Bible study that I realized that the population I was targeting was barely participating in either the electronic form or in person. There were definitely disruptions in what I foresaw in the proposal, but the data that will be shared in the following chapter will be very helpful in moving forward with the family-centered, church-supported paradigm shift at Salem Lutheran Church.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA

The first chapter laid out the specific reason for the project, namely assessing whether the Bible Study Series would help equip the families of Salem Lutheran Church in raising their children in the faith. In Chapter Two the biblical and doctrinal reasons for the Paradigm Shift were discussed. In Chapter Three there was a look at some of the recent literature on the topic both in the church and in the field of psychology when it comes to Attachment Theory. Chapter Four narrated how the project was carried out. In this chapter I take on the important task of analyzing the data. This is done in two parts. I first look at the responses from the quantitative research done prior to and after the Bible Study Series. Secondly, I examine the qualitative research that was done with four interviewees. During this analysis, the research is then integrated with the insights gained in the previous chapter. After this analysis is complete, an assessment of the findings will be made, both what I expected to find and what caused me to think harder about the findings during this project.

Data Analyses

Research Participants

The Bible study series was offered in the congregation in a variety of platforms—in person, via zoom, and via recordings on the church’s YouTube channel and organizational website. At the beginning there were twelve participants. This was lower than I was hoping to have. There seemed to be multiple reasons for this. As mentioned in Chapter Four the targeted group is very sporadic in attendance, especially after the Covid shut-downs. Another reason is that following Covid, many people especially cherished fellowship time. Since our Bible Study immediately followed that time of fellowship, perhaps this led to fewer people coming over for Bible class.

However, I was grateful for the twelve original¹ participants. Out of these participants six of them were male and six were female. About 50% of the participants were under the age of 50 (5) with the remaining participants being in their sixties and seventies. Eleven out of the twelve participants were also parents. The ages of their children ranged from 0 to over the age of 18. When it came to the breakdown of the ages of children, six participants had children over the age of 18, with four participants having children in the 13–18 year age range, followed by three participants having children in the 0–4 and 5–8 age range. Only one participant had a child in the 9–12 year age range.

All twelve people who participated in the survey were members, which was a requirement. Five of the participants were grandparents. Four of them were elected or appointed leaders of the congregation. Looking at this data it is evident that the sample does not include many of the congregation's parents with younger children even though, as previously stated, that was originally my desire. However, this also shows that grandparents and parents with older children are willing to learn about this paradigm shift.²

Below, the participants' pre-study survey results will be described followed by a discussion of post-survey results.

Pre-Study Survey Results

The findings of who the participants believe is the primary faith educator, primary catechism teacher, and the primary Bible study teacher of children at Salem Lutheran Church include survey results from before they participated in the Bible Study Series. When it came to

¹ When I discuss the post-study survey results, the reader will notice there were only nine that completed both surveys.

² In Appendix thirteen there are several graphs to see visually the results of the survey.

the opinions of who the primary faith educator is for children at Salem Lutheran Church, seven out of twelve participants chose the pastor while only two out of twelve participants chose either the father or mother. Others chosen were Sunday school teachers and grandparents.³ With regard to whom they believe is the primary catechism instructor, nine out of twelve chose the pastor while two participants chose father, and one participant chose a grandparent. Then when it came to the primary Bible teacher at Salem, ten participants chose pastor while the father and grandparent both had one participant's vote. Moving to the question asking, "Biblically, who is the primary faith educator for children?" ten out of twelve participants checked parent while two participants responded with the pastor. This seems higher than expected with the responses to the earlier questions being so low. However, this is a concept and topic that I have been sharing with the members of Salem even before the beginning of this MAP which may have influenced some respondents.

Another area that I wanted to discover is what participants thought before the class regarding the value of family devotions at home. When it came to their prioritizing of family devotions before the study, eight out of twelve participants shared that this time was of great value, while four out of twelve shared that it was of medium value in their homes. Results regarding the number of days families typically carried out devotions, this was almost evenly spread with three participants answering every day or five to six days a week, while two participants stated three to four days a week and four participants stated they participate in family devotions one to two days per week.

This was interesting given the fact that eight participants stated they placed great value on

³ In the survey results, several participants chose two answers for who are the primary faith instructor, catechism teacher, and bible teacher. This has skewed the results and shows that I should have given instructions to "circle one" on those questions.

family devotions but only three participants worked through them each day. This was a surprise to me when I first tallied the results of the surveys. However, when I looked at the ages of the participants and their responses, they are the older members who do not currently have children at home.⁴ With regard to the amount of time each day only one participant responded with one hour of time per day as well as 30–59 minutes. A majority of the respondents stated that they spend 15–29 minutes per day while three stated under 15 minutes per day in the amount of time they spent in family devotions.

The survey also asked participants prior to the Bible Study Series if they understood the terminology “family-centered, church-supported paradigm” when it comes to raising children in the faith, and only one answered no. I also asked how strongly they would agree that Salem should adopt this paradigm for raising children in the faith and eleven out of the twelve participants answered with strongly agree and one answered neither agree nor disagree. As noted above, as the pastor of Salem for some time already, I have shared with the members of Salem the concept of the family and church partnering in raising children in the faith. This, along with my providing a brief definition in the survey, likely contributed to a relatively high level of understanding and agreement even before the Bible study series. To close out the survey I listed a number of tools that could be developed for Salem to help support the paradigm shift and everyone agreed that we do need resources. There were differing ideas as to the types of resources with the lower totals being parenting mentors and the higher responses being at-home tools for prayer, devotions, and teaching the Bible.

In reviewing this data that was collected before the Bible class, amongst the participants

⁴ Of those who stated that that they participated in family devotions at home either every day or five to six days a week, five of them were over the age sixty. The same is true for those that placed great value on family devotions.

there was a general openness to learn this paradigm and then adopt it in their homes and also in the congregation. However as can be seen, the pre-study survey revealed that there needed to be some teaching about who are the primary educators for the life of faith of children. Before the Bible class began, it was many people's opinions that the primary faith educator is the pastor, even though they did know that Scriptures teach that faith education is primarily a parent's responsibility.

Post-Study Survey Results

In the next few pages I will provide the results from the survey responses after participants took part in the Bible Study Series. I will then analyze what stood out to me between the two surveys.

To begin with there were three less surveys completed. I do know that for the final class period one of the original participants ended up being out of town. Also, the other two participants that did not complete the post-survey were members who took part online. There were nine surveys that were completed after the Series with five male and four female respondents. There were no participants in their 30s while three were in their forties and the rest of the respondents were in their sixties and seventies. Eight out of the nine participants in the post-class survey are parents. The ages of their children included five that have children over 18, while four of them have children in the 13–18-year-old range and two participants had children in 0–4, 5–8, or 9–12-year-old ranges. The two participants in their 30s were among those that completed the first survey before the Series but not afterward.

All nine of the participants who took the survey at the end of the class are members. Five of them are grandparents and four⁵ are congregationally elected or appointed leaders

⁵ When I tallied the responses I noticed a discrepancy in the number of elected leaders between both surveys,

The viewpoints of the participants taking the post-study survey in regard to the primary faith educator, primary catechism instructor, and primary Bible teacher at Salem Lutheran Church in the post-study survey are as follows: six out of nine believe it is the pastor who is the primary faith educator at Salem and three participants said it was the Sunday School teacher. When it comes to the primary catechism instructor at Salem Lutheran Church, four participants say it is the pastor and five say it is the father. The participants marked the father as the primary Bible teacher at Salem Lutheran Church four times, with pastor coming in with two marks and Sunday School teacher with two as well.⁶ When we look at biblically who is the primary faith educator of children, all nine participants agreed that it is the parents' responsibility first and foremost.

Looking at the questions regarding family devotions six out of the nine participants mentioned that family devotions were of great value while three out of nine placed the value of family devotions at medium value. The number of times per week were spread out again across the board with three out of nine respondents saying every day, one out of nine respondents saying 5–6 days, three out of nine respondents marking 3–4 days per week and two out of nine respondents revealing that they only have family devotions 1–2 days per week. When it comes to the amount of time per day the majority of participants placed 30–59 minutes and 15–29 minutes.⁷

even though the same people were present and completed the surveys. I adjusted the results on the basis of my knowledge of who participated.

⁶ As in the pre-study survey results, which had multiple people mark two answers for these questions on primary faith educator, catechism instructor, and bible teacher at Salem Lutheran Church, there was several people that marked multiple answers. For instance, one individual marked both pastor and father as the primary catechism instructor. This causes a thought that perhaps this individual was beginning to see the partnership between church and home in faith educator. However, that was the only question that that individual marked two answers.

⁷ There are three respondents for 30–59 minutes and four respondents for 15–29 minutes.

In answering the question if they understand what the “family-centered, church-supported paradigm” is when it comes to raising children in the faith all nine participants stated that they understand the terminology and all nine of them say they would strongly agree with Salem adopting this family-centered, church-supported approach to raising children in the faith.

As it was in the pre-survey, everyone agreed that resources and tools would be important in moving towards a family-centered, church-supported paradigm. At-home tools for teaching both catechism and the Bible, as well as tools for family devotions and prayer received the most interest while parenting mentors received the least.

Comparison and Analysis of the Results

As we look at the differences between the two sets of surveys, there will obviously be differences with three less participants, however, one can learn from how the opinions of the participants changed over the course of the class. When it came to the primary faith educator at Salem Lutheran Church, there was little difference in the number of participants that chose pastor. Regarding the primary catechism instructor and primary Bible teacher more people did respond with the father being the primary, but still several chose people in the church, whether that be the pastor or Sunday school teachers.

Reading through my survey and analyzing the data of both surveys, the wording of my survey questions, especially about the primary faith educator, catechism instructor and Bible Study teacher at Salem Lutheran Church, I should have originally had verbiage to ask about the partnership between church and home. This comes from the discrepancy in the survey results between the question on who the primary faith educator is biblically and who the participants believe are the primary faith educators at Salem Lutheran Church. This may have changed the results of the survey.

There were several other important learnings that took place amongst the research of the surveys. When the participants responded to the question regarding devotional life, there was little change to the responses in the pre and post study surveys. Also, in both the pre and post surveys, they participants made it clear that resources and tools would be important to have for families. These resources and tools would better equip families for at home faith growth and discipleship. A final result from the surveys was more indirect in the way the surveys were written. I learned from the post-study survey that I could have asked in the pre-study survey if the paradigm shift was a new concept for the participants of the study or if they were already exposed to it. This way I could have measured the effectiveness of the Bible Study Series without the assumption of whether they knew about this teaching beforehand.

Qualitative Analysis

This project also involved qualitative research. For this study, the qualitative research, provided more helpful information. It was valuable in understanding how participants reacted to the Bible Study Series. I interviewed each person once after the Bible Study Series was completed. As I have already mentioned, my goal was to interview participants who had children 4th grade or younger since I believe instilling this paradigm into younger parents will help more effectively develop homes into discipleship centers. However, that age group of parents was missing from the class, so I chose to interview participants who either had children under 18 living at home or those who were elected/appointed leaders of the congregation. I felt this was necessary as I was seeking input on how this paradigm shift might look here at Salem. As we saw in the surveys, everyone that completed the final survey was in support of Salem shifting their paradigm for raising children in the faith.

As I share my qualitative findings, I will first introduce the four participants in the

interviews. I personally invited each of these participants to interview with me based upon falling into the newly established categories above.

Meet Participant 1

Participant 1 is a 67-year-old male who is an elected member of the Church Council. He also serves on the Board of Elders. Participant 1 is a parent and grandparent who is also influential in teaching the faith to his grandchildren.

Meet Participant 2

Participant 2 is a 63-year-old female who is a parent and grandparent. She is now influential in teaching the faith to her grandchildren. In the past she has been involved in the Sunday School ministry of the congregation.

Meet Participant 3

Participant 3 is a 41-year-old male who is a parent of a teenager. He also has older stepchildren. He is on the Board of Elders. Being a parent of a child at home, he is influential in raising his child in the faith.

Meet Participant 4

Participant 4 is a 42-year-old female who also has a teenager living at home. She has a couple of children that are adults and are living outside the area. Since she has a child still living at home, she is very much influential in the faith life of her child. Participant 4 is also elected to the Church Council.

Major Themes from Participant 1

In his reaction to the Bible Study Series, Participant 1 stated that in the past they always have tried to do prayers and small devotions with his kids in the home, but it “did not always go

well.” He did try to do it as much as possible, but maybe only 50% of the time. After going through the Bible Study Series, he stated that it is “important to stick with it.” The “it” being teaching the faith in the home, such that it is a discipleship center. I asked him to expand on the importance of sticking with it. He expanded that by sticking with it in the homes it could possibly help keep the kids from straying when they face outside influences and peer pressures.

As the interview continued several major themes were developed. He discusses how priorities amongst families are getting mixed up, which I would describe as the parental vocation is looking out for the wants and desires of the child, ahead of attending to their spiritual needs of faith development. Along with this vocational deficit, is the fact that many parents are afraid to tackle this topic because they are not well-equipped to teach the faith to their children. He states how the vocational deficit is seen in daily life, even when the parents do bring their children to church: “You (sic) can’t come to church on Sunday for an hour and then live like hell the rest of the week with swearing and drinking and all the other stuff and nothing else matters, you know we had, it has to be continuous through the week.” Participant 1 affirms that this vocation needs to be not just a one-hour task on Sunday, but all week long.

Another major theme that was developed through this interview is the fact that families need resources. The Church when it partners alongside of families for faith development of children needs to be providing resources. The Church needs to be the place where families, both parents and children, alike are equipped with God’s Word. Parents need to be equipped to teach their children at home. Participant 1 affirms this as he says: “All we can do is provide the resources that we have and the knowledge that we have on what is the true way to teach the Bible and help the family understand that this is our belief (sic). This is the true way we are supposed to be teaching.” He also says, “get those training resources to the families.” He is

clearly showing that the church needs to be providing resources to families.

Along with equipping parents, whether or not it is through physical resources, another theme that came out is that the church needs to be an inviting place for families. The congregation needs to work at building relationships with them so that the other church members understand the needs of families. When the church understands the needs, even the physical needs of families, the church can help connect the home and the church together. Then it is not a competition for someone's time. This is a corporate mentality between church and home and equipping parents and children alike does assist so that parents and the church are teaching the same thing.

Major Themes from Participant 2

Participant 2 in her reaction to the Bible Study Series stated that prior to the series they did do some of things that we talked about such as family devotions and the table prayer, but not very often. When discussing the major takeaways from the Bible Study Series, she mentioned the importance of bringing “your child up from a very little.” Along with that she discussed the importance of having routines and making it a ritual so that children can grasp the importance of the home discipleship. Routine and ritual and habit enable it to become something that they just do.

One of the themes that kept coming out with Participant 2 is how the priorities in families can easily become mixed up. She mentioned that “something came up” many times when they planned to do their family devotions. She does not just see the priorities of families getting in the way of family faith-building time, but also outside influences. She makes this clear as she states, “You can really see the world against God always, I mean, the devil is always working on our young people.” The devil loves to place obstacles in the way of families carrying out their

vocations. This is one of his primary tasks, to convince both parents and children that there is something more important than the family faith-building time. The devil desires to dismantle the parental vocation of raising children in the faith through whatever means possible.

The other major theme that came out with participant two is needing to provide resources to the families. Not just physical resources, but also providing those times of equipping not just parents, but also congregational leaders. She mentions, “I think you gotta (sic) get a core group...because you cannot (sic) do all right and then once you have them solid then they bring in some more people from our congregation and teach them.” Equipping the saints with both resources and physical teaching is vital when it comes to bringing this important message of the parenting vocation to the parents and to the congregational leaders.

Participant 2 started talking about the fact that some people, including parents, may not come to church because they feel inadequate or not worthy of what God has to offer them. This was an insightful theme that came out of this interview. The obstacles that the devil puts in place may very well be sports, jobs, families, friends, or academics, but it could also be this fact that for some people the church is not a comfortable place to come, because they do not feel worthy. Participant two made this interesting point, “And then you know going to church, but it is free, I mean you do not (sic) have to give right you know...that is (sic) is probably a stumbling block, too, because they have all been from little on, you gotta pay for anything you get.” This stood out to me—that it is hard for people to grasp hold of the cross as the solution and as everyone’s greatest need.

Major Themes from Participant 3

The Elder and 41-year-old father who is Participant 3, when asked about what type of home discipleship was occurring before the Bible Study Series, stated that on Sundays they were,

“doing Bible study ourselves.” They also had general prayer times for the family that occurred during the week, as well.

One of the biggest themes that came out in this interview was the realization for him, that while growing up at Salem, his family did not talk much about the Bible at home during the week. He added to this realization that it cannot just be the church doing the job of the parents—that is raising children in the faith—but the parents, as well. This realization of the importance of parents being heavily involved in the discipleship of their children adds to his thoughts that he, as a parent, needs to place an emphasis on this in his home. He states that it is going to “take more at home, more prayer and more teaching.”

When asking him both as a parent and as a church leader how members will see this paradigm shift at Salem, he indicated that he believed that if more people heard it and understood it, it would start to become the culture here. After more discussion, two themes came out. First, it will be a challenge because of the priorities of parents. For many parents “it is just not a priority,” Participant 3 stated. As he continued, the theme of misplaced vocational priorities was really stressed. He spoke about people being “busy with their jobs,” that Sunday is “just a day off”, that “they want (their kids) to be successful in school I think, and sports or any other extracurriculars.”

Second, building from this theme of misplaced vocational priorities, he mentioned that parents have to “want it” and by that he meant wanting to be involved in the life of the church and wanting to be equipped to help build their children as disciples of Jesus Christ. In order for people to “want it,” they need to be able to hear the family-centered, church-supported paradigm in snippets, so they hear it when they are in the midst of various life circumstances. As he talks about people wanting it, this participant also points out that “if they want it, they are gonna find a

way to get the information.” This is true in many avenues of life; if a person really wants to find something out or do something they are going to find out the information to do it. This builds off of the parenting vocation. Each parent wants what is best for their children and to give them the best. For Christian parents the best is the handing down of the faith to them and being a discipleship center at home.

Participant 3 brought up a final theme that indicated that when people do “want it” they need to have “good material to teach from.” This material is what comes from the church. He suggested they be given “one or two good things.” He has been going online and finding resources, but is looking for more solid material in order for his home to be a solid discipleship center.

Major Themes from Participant 4

Participant 4 had several themes that kept coming up in her interview. One was that working with her child at home is very important. Another was various vocational problems with parents who have priorities in different areas. She also brought up the theme of resources.

Participant 4 began by sharing how important it was to keep church in the life of her family when the COVID-19 Pandemic sent everyone home and worshipping from their couches. They worked hard at this as a family unit, stating that she “wanted her daughter to shine.” Participant 4 really wants her daughter to have the foundation of faith in her life. This was a another major theme for her, namely wanting her home to be a discipleship center. She shared that she wants her daughter “to grow up knowing that she’s forgiven and knowing what God did for her.” Understanding this vocational side of parenting is important for every parent to have.

When I asked about takeaways from the class, again this theme of the importance of home Bible study was brought out. Participant 4 has a passion for this family-centered, church-

supported approach to raising children in the faith. She wants that foundation for her daughter, because as children oftentimes do, they get into trouble and disappoint their parents. She wants that foundation for her daughter so that she knows where to turn when trouble comes.

This is where she picks up on the priority issue. Parents and children each have sinful tendencies alike. Parents want what is best for their kids, but oftentimes they think that it is the athletics that their children are so passionate about. They might even believe that it is the job of their child to excel in athletics. And so, parents push him or her in that direction. By pushing them in these and other places, parents oftentimes forget about the church, and then the child forgets about the church, and then the child and the parents drift away from the faith. This is the importance of having that priority and making it a habit, “and setting aside that special time” for faith building in the home.

This theme of vocational identity problems did not just come in with the parental vocation. She also discussed vocational identity with the vocation of being a member of the church and supporting the work of the church and the home. Many times people in the church are really good at being “busy doing things that have no impact on growing our youth.” They have little desire, passion, or knowledge of what it takes to raise children in the faith. She even mentioned many in the congregation prioritize coffee and rolls over Bible Study. She made this very clear and shared a simple truth, “it’s not about the [dessert] bars in fellowship, it’s not about the coffee, it’s not about that priority—it’s about our church family and coming to Bible Study and making sure that it is important.” She pointed out clearly the theme of vocational problems in the church and in the home. The reason why the church does not have the paradigm is because many have forgotten the basics of what it means to have a vocation as a Child of God.

The other basic theme that came out throughout the interview is the fact that we need

resources, good solid resources, provided to the families by the church. These would be resources that are available to pick up in the church proper. There would also be resources shared with the families, such as free online resources. Participant 4 was very excited to come in and speak with me so that she could discuss more about the resources that I shared in class. Providing faith building resources to families from early on is of great importance, whether it is at baptism or even prior in pre-marriage sessions. As the theme came out, the secondary theme of equipping, teaching, and instructing was also very clear. She spoke about the instinct of teaching our kids to walk and talk, and related it to the need to equip in such a way that parents direct that instinct toward teaching their kids the faith from little on up. The resources that the church provides and shares can help parents do that.

Major Themes Shared by the Participants

There were six major themes that were shared between all four of the participants in the interviews. In the quantitative research many of these themes stood out there, as well. These six major themes include: (1) the need for resources, (2) priorities, (3) the understanding of the paradigm, (4) seeing the shift develop at Salem, (5) the doctrine of vocation, and (6) the fact that attachment to other things other than Christ can draw children (and parents) away from Christ.

The one major thing that is lacking in the church today for our families is a set of good solid resources that they can take home and use with their children. Obviously as was stated back in Chapter Two, Luther wrote the Small Catechism as a simple way for parents, especially fathers, to teach their families. Parents also have God's Word to teach. However, when they do not know how to teach using those resources, parents will be lost. The pastoral vocation of equipping the saints is important here, as well. Equipping parents and providing good quality resources for homes was a theme shared by each of the parents.

The second major theme between the four participants is the fact that many families—both children and parents alike—have mixed-up priorities when it comes to their life of faith. They will place more value on the things of this world than on things of God. They find more value in sports, extracurricular activities, and academics, among many others. In Chapter Three, cultural liturgies were discussed. These cultural liturgies are around all of us and God’s people also succumb to them. God’s people fall prey to breaking the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods”⁸ all the time. As sinners, parents and children, have a natural tendency to look elsewhere to place their fear, love, and trust. This flowed out from each of the interviewees.

Continuing with the second theme of mixed-up priorities: Each participant also talked about the influence of society and without using the terminology of secular liturgies, it was implied. These secular or cultural liturgies that are ongoing in each aspect of one’s life can and do take people away from the faith. Parents and children fall into the habit of not being in the Word, but being on the ballfield, gym court, dance hall or wherever else these liturgies are located, and families begin to worship these idols.

The third major theme that each of the participants shared was that that this paradigm is important. Passing down the faith from one generation to the next is critical; it is what God has called us to do. They each saw the importance of keeping faith in the home and making it a priority in their homes so that these homes can be discipleship centers—homes that center on faith—while the church is supporting them.

The fourth major theme that developed among each of these groups comes from when they were asked about if this paradigm shift could happen at Salem. Each of them reported they thought that it could and agreed that Salem should move in this direction. However, one

⁸ SC First Commandment in McCain, 317.

participant responded that it would be a difficult process because of the nature of the change and the priorities that people have in the church. This participant did agree with the rest of the participants that if there was enough teaching and if the message continued to be spread across the congregation, that in time, the people of Salem may come to embrace the paradigm shift.

The fifth major theme derived from the interviews is the doctrine of vocation. Each of the four interviewees agreed that biblically this is an important concept. Even with the surveys they all understood that biblically the parent is the chief faith educator of their children. In connecting back to Chapter Two, each of the interviewees understood the most important aspect of the vocation as a parent—that is teaching their children the faith and bringing them up in the fear the Lord.

They also understand the vocation of pastor as well as his helpers in the church to be equipping the next generation, along with the parents, and those influential in the faith of children.

The sixth major theme is the fact that attachment to things other than Christ can draw children (and parents) away from Christ. In Chapter Three I explored the recent research across denominations as well as the secular theory of Attachment Theory. Each of the participants made it clear we need more resources for families, so that they can be properly equipped to be discipleship centers. It was also interesting that without using the term of Attachment Theory, they all talked about how friends, sports, and even peer pressure can be a temptation for children to not be involved at home with the faith and how parents have less influence over their children.

Expected and Unexpected Findings

Working through this Bible Study Series was important in order to answer the question posed in Chapter One: Does a Bible Study Series on the family-centered, church-supported

paradigm help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith? In answering this question, I expected to find out that it does help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith. My expectation of a “yes” answer proved to be correct. Another expected finding, in a disappointing way was the lack of participants, since the people of Salem already do not place a high priority Bible studies in the first place. Even with the minimal number of participants I am encouraged that even in what many may call the post-Covid church, I still had between 15 and 20% of the adults in worship in my classes. The average attendance has been seventy people in worship and there were ten adults in class which was 14.3% of those in worship.

I also expected people to want and desire resources for faith building in the home. However, as one of my interviewees made clear, you must “want it” in order to use it to benefit the discipleship process in one’s home.

When it came to the questions about devotional life in the home, I was expecting the results to be more varied regarding how often and for what the length of time families took part. Unexpectedly, though, I discovered that many people view home devotions to have great value. But I also learned that even though they valued them, they did not put a lot of a time or effort into them. This issue goes back to the resources; if people had the resources for home devotions or other forms of home-centered discipleship, perhaps one might see the amount of time dedicated to it grow.

I asked a very clear question to each participant about whether they foresee Salem adopting this paradigm, they all said yes, provided there is more teaching. I was expecting them to suggest a sermon series on the topic, but, unexpectedly that did not occur. Instead they suggested sharing bits and pieces of the studies in meetings where people are congregated in the church.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter One laid out the problem, rationale, and question for the MAP. Chapters Two and Three provided the framework for the Bible study with the biblical and doctrinal foundations, as well as what the recent research is saying. This led to the Bible Study Series. In Chapter Four I laid out the process of the research. Here in Chapter Five I discussed the findings of the project. I began with a discussion of the quantitative research and then moved into the findings in the qualitative portion of the project. It was through these two ways of gathering data that I learned, that yes, the Bible Study Series does help the members of Salem to equip children in the homes. There was the theme of vocational confusion and the need for more resources which the qualitative interviews showed. I also examined my findings, including the fact that no one suggested I preach a sermon series on this very important vocation of raising children in the faith.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY

This MAP, as I stated at the beginning, began eight- and one-half years ago when my first daughter was born. However, the project really took shape when I arrived at Salem Lutheran Church in Barron, Wisconsin two and a half years ago. I have always had a passion for ministering to families and children during my eleven years as a pastor. I would ask the question: “How do I get more kids involved?” The answer, even though I did not at first realize it, was always in front of me—the parents. When I arrived at Salem, I started discussing what was needed most. One of the most prevalent answers was getting the younger people active in the church. However, that is a common theme in each of the congregations I served (and more than likely an answer I would receive in most congregations).

I arrived where I am now based on my background, Scripture, doctrines of the church, and current literature—both secular and spiritual. In Chapter One I explored the research problem and the research question: Does a Bible Study Series on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith? I also began to explore the fact that parents need to be more active in the discipleship of their children. Chapter Two focused on the theological foundations of the project. The biblical foundation of chapter two focused on Deut. 6:4–9, a portion of Ps. 78, sections of Proverbs, Eph. 6:4, and Matt. 19:13–15. I also included a section on the doctrinal foundation of the family-centered, church-supported paradigm. Vocation, Baptism, the Priesthood of All Believers, and application of the Law and the Gospel in parenting were the main foci of this portion of the chapter. The third chapter focused on the recent research regarding the family-centered, church-supported paradigm. Recent work in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Evangelical

Community were discussed. There was also a discussion on the Cultural Liturgies from James K. A. Smith and the secular Attachment Theory. Each of these areas aided greatly in the development of the Bible Study Series. Chapter Four gave the narrative and timeline of how the project was carried out here at Salem Lutheran Church. Chapter Five was the synthesis of the research carried out at Salem—quantitative and qualitative research. This analysis helped me understand and come to the answer that yes, a Bible study series does help. Here in Chapter Six, I share the impact that the project had on me personally and in congregation of Salem Lutheran Church. I also provide a section on future recommendations for Salem and how I can continue to teach the Paradigm Shift.

Personal Impacts

This MAP has given me a great opportunity to grow in my vocation as a father. There were points in my research, especially when studying Scripture, that made me aware of my faults. I was confronted with the fact that I have not carried out the vocation of father and primary discipler of my own children very well. As I considered these vocations, it helped me connect with parents who shared these callings. I realized that even though I am a pastor, I still need to work on how I center the faith formation in my family as a father. This was critical for me as I taught the Bible study and was hearing the feedback and participating in the discussions in class. This will also aid in how I continue to work towards a fuller paradigm shift at Salem.

This project did not just affect me personally as a father, but also, in my vocation as a pastor. In my vocation as a pastor, I realized that I, too, often have fallen into the church-centered, family-supported paradigm. After all, this is how I grew up. This is what I know. In order to bring a congregation through this shift, I, personally, as a pastor, need to fully embrace the shift in my own home. I also need to fully embrace it in the way that I teach in the church.

With the amount of reading and research that I did to bring me to the point that I am at today, I can see myself personally and professionally in the future teaching on this important paradigm shift. Even though this topic is not novel as there are numerous writings currently on this topic, there is still a need to inculcate the shift into the hearts and lives of congregations, pastors, lay leaders, and parents themselves. It is a critical paradigm and will only aid in the building up of the church and family.

Doing this project has also opened my eyes to the struggles that parents have with their children and grandparents have with their adult children. Learning from more experienced parents during this process shows that even I do not stop growing or learning in any of my vocations whether the vocation is pastor, husband, or father.

Ministry Impacts

Reflecting on this project in my current ministry setting is important. My prayer is that someday this will have a more obvious congregation-wide impact and that many will come to see the value of the paradigm shift work to implement it throughout the congregation. Working with the participants who took part in this study has given me hope that this shift will continue to receive buy-in and its impact will continue to grow in the congregation as I continue to teach and lead in that direction.

The most obvious ministry impact at this point has been among those that participated in the Bible Study Series. But their influence in the congregation also means that their participation in the study is having a wider impact, as well. The areas of impact that I will describe below all relate to these members seeing the importance of homes being discipleship centers which are supported and resourced by the congregation's ministry.

The first area of impact is that members increasingly realized the need for the paradigm

shift at Salem. As noted in the previous chapter, by the end of the Bible Study Series, everyone that completed the series understood the paradigm, the importance of the paradigm, and they also agreed that Salem should work towards the family-centered, church-supported paradigm shift. When it comes to working towards the shift, the participants in the class all stated that resources will be key in making the paradigm shift. However, it is not just the resources that are key, but also the continued equipping of congregational leaders, parents, and quite literally every member of the congregation. This full ministry impact will take time, effort, and prayer. This will also only succeed with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The second area of impact is congregational leaders realized that this needs to be a priority at Salem. As mentioned in the previous paragraph this full ministry impact will take time, effort, and prayer. But because of the influence of such leaders, it is reasonable to assume that such a prioritization will be realized.

The third area of impact is that a growing number of parents now desire to focus on faith formation in their homes. During the teaching of the Bible class, as well as the interviews afterwards, many participants pointed out that the hearts of mankind are not focused on the true God but on everything else other than God, creating idols for themselves. It was also shown that sometimes these things that make us busy conflict with our Christian faith—especially when they draw us away from Christ. This happens when priorities that have been discussed and as I discuss more in the fourth area of impact below draw us away from worship of the true God. Knowing this, the participants of the Bible Study Series and those who participated in follow-up interview saw the need to refocus to more faith formation in their homes.

The fourth area of impact is that parents saw the need for reprioritizing their use of time. In the life of the congregation and in the life of families, there seems to be growing competition for

the available time of individuals and families. This competition for time comes from places of employment, schools, sports, civic organizations, and the church, to name a few. It is therefore difficult to ask parents to add one more thing to their schedule with some additional programming at the church. Yet, with the competition of time, this competition has not only impacted midweek ministry activities, but also the Sunday Morning Divine Service. The interviewees saw this competition of time in their lives and how it affects them. Seeing the connection helps them see the need for reprioritizing their use of time.

The fifth area of impact is that families need to apply Law and Gospel. As one looks at the priorities of parents, children, and families as a whole, repentance is key to bringing this paradigm shift into practice. As was noted in Chapter Two, the Lutheran faith adds a vital conversation piece to the discussion of this shift and that is the role of law and gospel in parenting. When the law reveals sin in life, repentance needs to follow, and then the great gift of forgiveness in Christ which gives peace and comfort, cleansing one's guilty conscience. For example, when a parent realizes he failed in some aspect of his vocation of raising his children in the faith, upon receiving the gospel he is assured of having peace with God. This repentance and receiving of God's grace through his Word of law and gospel, will also work to change his ways in raising his children in the faith. Ultimately, such a change only comes through the power of the gospel.

The sixth and unexpected area of impact has to do with the fact that this MAP occurred in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. I asked my interviewees directly about the impact of COVID-19 in their homes and how the "stay-at-home" orders affected their family faith life. Several of them said that it helped them grow closer together as a family. They also incorporated more faith talk into their homes. This was a positive impact, because as one of the participants

told me, “We just don’t have to do it in the building, we can do it at home, that’s where it all began, we can do it again.” The “it” to which this participant was referring is faith development in the home.

The seventh area of impact will be in the future programming initiatives at Salem Lutheran Church. In future projects that are similar, I have learned that I will need to seek out and personally ask participants to join a Bible study series or to engage in a sermon/sermon series. This will help to get the feedback and results which I am seeking.

Future Recommendations

As I have seen the problem, asked the question, moved through the theological foundations, looked at current literature in the church and in the secular realm, taught the class, and did both quantitative and qualitative research, I have come up with several recommendations for the future. These actions will only aid in providing resources and equipping the congregation and her leaders, parents, families, and individuals in the change.

The first recommendation comes from several of my interviewees who suggested that I work on teaching this paradigm shift in meetings of the various leadership boards as well as touch on it at times when I have congregation members together. One of these times is when I do confirmation orientation for the parents and students. This is an easy life-stage for me to share the importance of raising children in the faith. Another life-stage is at the birth of a child when parents come to me asking for a baptism. Even earlier than that, during pre-marriage counseling is a golden opportunity to teach future parents their role in raising their children in the faith. Another golden opportunity to teach on this shift is in future new member classes. This can be done when teaching on the first, third, and fourth commandments.

The second recommendation is actually an indirect result of my research results. This

recommendation is to transfer this Bible Study Series into a sermon series. This recommendation comes about in the fact that getting a larger percentage of the congregation to hear about the paradigm shift will only hear it on Sunday Morning Sermon. This is a challenge for me, since I am a lectionary preacher. I prefer the lectionary, however, stepping outside the lectionary to focus on a specific topic is not bad; it can aid the congregation in an area of growth. This is one area of growth that the congregation is needing to become a more family-centered, church-supported congregation in raising children in the faith. The purpose of this recommendation is to touch the most people in the congregation at one given time. Speaking to this, after going through this whole process, if I had to do it over again, I would have chosen a sermon series over a Bible study series. This would have been a better approach for this congregation and her members which are not heavily invested in Bible study. However, with this, I love to teach, and I received great feedback from the participants learning together during the class.

The third recommendation that is critical for developing this paradigm is to maintain the focus on Jesus. Many resources that focus on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm for raising children in the faith are primarily focused on the law. However, the law is not what changes hearts, the law is what drives individuals to their Savior, and it is the gospel that changes hearts. This is especially true in the large and growing resources produced by Evangelical authors. This focus on Jesus in parenting and the proper application of both Law and Gospel is also crucial for making homes discipleship centers. Assuming that Christian parents have baptized their children, this focus on Jesus and applying Law and Gospel just adds to the beauty of the home being a discipleship center. Having Jesus as the center of homes will then impact all areas of one's home and family life.

Since the participants in the Bible Study Series asked for resources to be provided to them,

my fourth recommendation is to actually do that, provide resources to families to assist in doing daily devotions at home. One way the congregation is already doing this is by providing Bibles when a child turns three and enters Third Grade and then on the day the child participates in the Rite of Confirmation. The congregation also provides catechisms to our fifth-grade students and then a hymnal to our seventh-grade students. Several other resources is to provide families with the *My Devotions* devotional publication for elementary age children, much as we do the *Portals of Prayer* for our individuals and families of the congregation. I also foresee going along with the handing out of each of these resources to provide training to parents on how to use these in their homes.

As I have had time to process the entire project, my fifth and final recommendation for future discussion, teaching, and equipping is to work with the families on a more one-on-one basis. Each family unit has their own struggles and by being invested in the individual family, a person may be more able to provide proper resources for cultivating discipleship in the home. This final recommendation could also be done with further research on the various types of family units that include children in the home. This would include family units whose children are raised by both parents in separate homes, single-parent families, grandparents raising grandchildren, second-marriage families with potentially children from both the man and woman in the marriage relationship and children together. There is also the need for looking at the impact of faith growth in a family unit where both parents are not from the same faith background. This area of research in the church on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm for raising children in the faith is essential, especially in the current culture of today's world.

Conclusion

This project began by looking at where I am as a father and asking the question: How do I bring my children up in the fear of the Lord? This MAP has helped me personally in my roles as father and husband and professionally in my vocation as a pastor. I learned that there is an answer to the age-old question, “How do we keep our children in church beyond baptism and confirmation?” The answer lies with the parents. I have shown that parents are critical for the upbringing of their children in the faith. Dr. Steve Parr and Dr. Tom Crites in their book *Why They Stay* make the important point that “One of your most important jobs as a parent is to encourage the spiritual development of your children.”¹ It comes from parents and parents need to take this job seriously.

I have also shown that the answer to the question “Does a Bible Study Series on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith?” is indeed yes. It does help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the faith. It helps because God Himself promises that His Word will not return void. His Word will work and the Holy Spirit will also work where and when He pleases.

In conclusion, there is much work that is left to be done in bringing about this paradigm shift at Salem Lutheran Church in Barron, Wisconsin. It will take much prayer, study, and teaching, without forgetting the impact of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God’s children. This is not just children by age, but all of God’s children at Salem can be aided and helped by the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God to see the importance of faith building in the home. It is also clear that the home is not the only place faith-building takes places—there needs to be the

¹Dr. Steve R. Parr and Dr. Tom Crites, *Why They Stay: Helping Parents and Church Leaders Make Investments That Keep Children and Teens Connected to the Church for a Lifetime*, (Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2015), 57.

partnership and support from the church.²

In order visualize this in the life of the congregation and the life of a traditional family, I have created a “Day in the Life” of what this might look like for a Christian family in Appendix Fifteen. In addition to the “Day in the Life”, I have also included in Appendix Sixteen an extension of what the Evening Devotional Time would look like. These provide only a small piece of what this may look like in an individual family and an individual congregation. These appendices also shows that there is a partnership, and the church is supporting the family in raising children in the faith. As has been stated, faith-building is centered in the family and is supported by the church, where the church and her leaders assist with equipping and teaching.

² Resources for congregations and families are continuing to emerge from both the Church at large and from the secular world. One helpful resource that was published right as this MAP was being completed is based on extensive research by sociologists Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation*. In it they wrote, “The primary responsibility for passing on religious faith and practice to children rests with parents; religious congregations are secondary and primarily supportive.” Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation*, (New York: Oxford, 2021), 31. This shows that this paradigm of congregations supporting families in raising their children in the faith will be an ongoing discussion in the church and secular research.

APPENDIX ONE

Family-Centered, Church-Supported Bible Study – Part 1

I. Introduction

- a. The Mission of Salem Lutheran Church and her values.
- b. The Biblical Mission – Read Matthew 28:16–20
- c. Defining the Old Paradigm and the New Paradigm.

i. Old Paradigm

Under the old paradigm, the rules and regulations that governed Christian education were based on a church-centered, home supported faith-development model. **This model dictated that the home do all it could to provide support and resources for the church to teach the faith.** The home helped the church be best it could be. As a result, the church said, ‘Come to us for learning about and growing in the faith. We want to build a strong church. (Freudenberg and Lawrence in *The Family Friendly Church*, 98.)

ii. New Paradigm

Under the new paradigm, the rules and regulations that govern Christian education are based on a home-centered, church-supported faith development model. **The new model dictates that the church do all it can to provide support and training for parents in the development of their kids’ faith in their homes.** The church exists to partner with homes to be the best they can be. The result: The church says, ‘Come to us to learn how to teach the faith in your home. We’ll be a resource of ideas, training, and programs, and we’ll provide you with everything you need to teach the faith at home. Strong homes make strong churches.’ (Freudenberg and Lawrence in *The Family Friendly Church*, 98.)

Question: Where do you see Salem Lutheran Church in these paradigms?

II. Deuteronomy Support for the New Paradigm

- a. Read Deuteronomy 4:9–10; Deuteronomy 6:2, Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Question: What does God instruct the Children of Israel through Moses in these words?

- b. Deuteronomy 6:7 – “You Shall Teach Diligently”

i. Engraver

The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer label of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is there to stay. Thus, it is that the generations of Israelites to come must receive and transmit the words of the Lord's everlasting covenant revelation. (Eugene Merrill in his *Deuteronomy Commentary*, 167.)

Question: How does this image relate to the task of building the faith in children?

ii. Repetition

Question: What does God say should be repeated and where should it be repeated?

III. Support from Wisdom Literature for the New Paradigm

a. Read Psalm 78:4–6

“For the classic passage on teaching the faith to one's *children* see Deuteronomy 6:6–9, for Scripture has no room for parental neutrality.” (Derek Kidner in his commentary on the Psalms, 281)

Question: What are the Children of Israel again commanded to do?

b. Proverbs

- i. Read Proverbs 1:8, Scripture not only teaches something, but then it does it.

It is noteworthy that both parents are mentioned here and elsewhere in Proverbs as involved in the training of a child. Some understand the address as coming from a sage to a pupil, who is not a biological child. While a sage could address his student as “son”, the continued reference throughout Proverbs to both mother and father as instructors and trainers of children—and their pride in children who do well, and their shame when their children go astray—indicates that this instruction from actual parents. Also note that Solomon mentions learning the same lessons from his own parents. The responsibilities of parents to train children are, therefore taken seriously in Proverbs, especially in the opening chapters. (Steinmann in *Proverbs Commentary*, 69–70)

Question: Skim the first few chapters of Proverbs. What is Solomon doing?

ii. Read Proverbs 22:6

1. “Train up” – Consecrating and starting a child on a certain course of life.
2. “In the way he should go”

“This proverb teaches that parents are to consecrate, discipline, and educate their children according to the Word of God in the way of wisdom, which is the way of faith and everlasting life.” (Steinmann, 442)

Question: What is the way he should go?

3. “Even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Question: Is this a comforting word for you?

Question: Do these verses from the Old Testament direct us to the New Paradigm?

Introduce the Family Friendly Tweak. – Taking a current program/project of the church and tweaking it to be more home oriented.

APPENDIX TWO

Family-Centered, Church-Supported Bible Study – Part 2

IV. New Testament support for the Family-Centered Paradigm

a. Read Ephesians 5:22–6:9 – *Haustafel* “Domestic Order”

Question: What are some of the relationships that St. Paul discusses? What is the relationship of marriage to parenting?

Although obedience to God’s Law in the household order entails certain earthly rewards—as indeed all created beings may enjoy the blessings placed by God into his creation—the baptized child of God seeks and finds a deeper blessing in what God has established and given. By recognizing in family life the gracious disposition of his heavenly Father, the Christian discovers that the divinely ordered family, like marriage itself, can be a vehicle of the Gospel. (Winger in his commentary on *Ephesians*, 675.)

- i. Αλλα εκτρεφετε αυτα εν παιδεια και νουθεσια κυριου (But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.)

1. Εκτρεφετε – “Bring them up” – more precisely “to nourish up to maturity” or “to nurture”.

Question: What are parents called to do for their children physically? Emotionally? Spiritually?

2. Παιδεια – Discipline – Double Modified

Question: What does discipline mean to you?

3. Νουθεσια – “instruction”

- a. Read 1 Corinthians 10:11a.

Question: How is the word instruction used in this verse?

4. Κυριου – “of the Lord”

“Thus, the emphasis is more on the *teaching* duties of the father as a παιδευτηζ, “instructor”, who not only gives instruction from and about the Lord, and his wisdom through His Word, but does so also in his stead.” (Winger, 663).

Question: What does discipline now mean to you?

- b. Read Matthew 19:13–15 (parallel accounts are found in Mark 10:13–16 and Luke 18:15–17).

Question: Who do you think is bringing children to Jesus?

Question: How do the disciples view children?

His disciples saw these children as the ancient world did as “lowly in status and regarded as powerless, foolish, and (at times) unimportant.” (Gibbs in his *Matthew Commentary*, 961)

Question: Jesus sees things differently. How does he see things? Does Jesus see children as disciples?

Question: Do these verses in the New Testament direct us to the New Paradigm?

APPENDIX THREE

Family-Centered, Church-Supported Bible Study – Part 3

V. Doctrinal Support for the Paradigm Shift

a. Vocation

i. Definitions

1. “A vocation is a “station” which is by nature helpful to others if it be followed.” (Gustav Wingren, 4)
2. “It can refer to the very proclamation of the gospel through which human beings are called to be children of God. It can also be used as meaning the work with each one does.” (Wingren, 1)

Question: What are some of the vocations you find yourselves in?

ii. The Parenting Vocation – What does it look like?

1. Physical

The vocation of parenthood is **very physical**. It begins with our flesh and results in another mouth to feed and a body to protect. It means holding the child, soothing the child, and meeting the needs of the child. Caring for a child can be dirty, exhausting, and stressful. Changing diapers, potty training, keeping the child fed, buying clothes, tending the child through sickness, **getting the child educated**, driving the child to one activity after another—it is all loving and serving. (Gene Vieth and Mary Moerbe in their book *Family Vocation*, 116.)

2. Spiritual

“Therefore, let everyone know that it is his duty,¹ on peril of losing the divine favor, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God above all things.” (LC I:174)

“We must therefore, impress this truth upon the young that they should think of their parents as

¹ In the Kolb-Wengert version of the *Book of Concord* they include the word “chief.” This is a critical word, and it is especially important for this project. The chief duty of the parent is to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God. LC I:174 in Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 410.

standing in God's place." (LC I:108)

Question: What Spiritual/Biblical issues do parents teach their children?

iii. Office of the Holy Ministry

Question: What is the place of the pastor and the congregation in providing faith education for the children?

1. Read Ephesians 4:12. – What is the task given here?

"They should always teach the catechism." (LC Preface: 1)

"Therefore, I beg you all for God's sake, my dear sirs and brethren, who are pastors or preachers to devote yourselves heartily to your office. Have pity on the people entrusted who are entrusted to you and help us teach the catechism to the people, and especially to the young. And let those who of you who cannot do better take these tables and forms and impress them, word for word, on the people." (SC Preface: 6)

"Therefore, it is the duty of every father of a family to question and examine his children and servants at least once a week and see what they know or are learning from the catechism. And if they do not know it, he should keep them learning it faithfully." (LC Short Preface: 4)

"This instruction or catechization I cannot put better or more plainly than has been done from the beginning of Christendom and retained till now, i.e., in these three parts, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Our Father. These three plainly and chiefly contain exactly everything that the Christian needs to know. This instruction must be given, as long as there is no special congregation, from the pulpit at stated times or daily *as may be needed and repeated or read aloud evenings and mornings in the homes for the children and servants, in order to train them as Christians.*" (Martin Luther in *Liturgy and Hymns*, 64).

Question: Who is responsible for teaching the children the Christian faith?

b. Baptism – How important is Baptism?

i. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. In Baptism you are made into a new creation.

Question: Who brings the child to be baptized?

Question: How should parents celebrate Baptism?

Question: Whose act is baptism?

c. Priesthood of All Believers

Question: What is a priest?

i. Read 1 Peter 2:9.

Question: What does this verse tell us about who we are?

Question: What makes God's people priests?

ii. Philip Spener and the *Hausvater*

“His first proposal stressed that the word of God must become a central part of parishioners' lives.” (Denise Ketterling-Lane, 58)

iii. Luther's Big question! “What if the parent's fail in this duty?”

Question: Why might parents fail in their duty? Who should do it then? Does this show the partnership between church and home?

Question: How does the typical church do faith education?

Question: What are the consequences?

Freudenberg in his book admits this when he talks about his first call as a youth minister: “We had very little parental support, so we took over the parents' role. And we burned out big time—especially after we had our own kids. It pains me to say that when we left Shore Haven, many of the kids dropped out of the church. I didn't know what I'd done wrong, but I knew it was bad.” (Freudenberg and Lawrence, 18)

Question: What is the answer to these consequences?

APPENDIX FOUR

Family-Centered, Church-Supported Bible Study – Part 4 and 5

VI. Recent Research in the Paradigm Shift

Ben Freudenberg wrote nearly twenty-five years ago: Denominational leaders asked me to write about the role of parents in youth ministry as part of a thirteen-week leadership training course called “Lead On.” In my segment, I compared a youth ministry without parent participation to a tent with a missing pole—it’s just a matter of time before the thing collapses. It was a blow to me when my denomination’s youth office rejected my vision. “That won’t work,” they said, “because kids don’t want their parents around at youth group.” They wanted to tweak my material to limit parent’s involvement to what I considered shallow responsibilities—taxi drivers, cooks and cash machines. (Ben Freudenberg, *Family Friendly Church*, 19).

- a. Where is the shift seen in the LCMS?
 - i. Ben Freudenberg
 - ii. David Rueter – *Teaching the Faith at Home: What does this Mean? How is this Done?*
 1. The Church has failed in the task to equip parents.
 2. Parents need training.
 3. Who is responsible? Church or parents?
 4. When does this training begin?
 - iii. Dr. John Eckrich – *Family Wellness: Raising Resilient, Christ-Centered Children*
 1. What is the primary role parents have?
 2. Vocation.

Question: What are some important vocational tasks of parents?

3. Physical vs. Spiritual well-being. Are they both crucial?
4. Team approach to discipling children?

Question: How do children learn?

“Again, your children will observe the ways you express the purpose and direction of your own journey as a follower of Christ. Take every opportunity to show, by word and deed, how you live out your faith and the Christian love instilled in your heart as you care for God’s people and all of God’s Children.” (Dr. John Eckrich, *Family Wellness*, 43).

- iv. Lutheran Hour Ministries – *Households of Faith* and *The Spiritually Vibrant Home*

Question: What is the ideal place for discipleship?

Question: Is it encouraging to see that the LCMS is seeing education of children differently then it did twenty-five years ago?

b. Primary Authors in the Evangelical World

i. Mark Holmen *Faith Begins at Home*

Question: Are parents looking for help? Where do parents look for help? Where do parents fail to look for help?

“Many families don’t recognize the local church as a resource to help them with their family relationships.” (Mark Holmen: *Faith Begins at Home*, 118).

Question: Does the church do a good job at helping families with their relationships?

Question: Do our homes need a makeover?

1. Deuteronomy 6:7 – Impress. “Faith that sticks” “Teach them constantly.”

Question: When do parents need to learn to do faith-talk?

ii. Rob Rienow – *Visionary Parenting*

1. Deuteronomy 6 – What is the parenting mission?
2. What are families seen as today? Discipleship centers or something different?
3. Do the priorities of parents align with Deuteronomy 6?

We are now at the point that if our ten-year old makes the travel soccer team, everything else in life takes a backseat, including church. We make it to church when we can; if it fits the schedule. My point here is not that missing the church is the worst thing in the world. Rather, my concern is that if *every time* sports and church collide on your calendar sports wins, then the schedule you have chosen is teaching your children that you value their bodies more than their souls. (Rienow, 40)

Question for personal reflection: Where are your family’s priorities?

4. Ephesians 6:4 – “training”
 - a. Vocation – Father – “Practice spiritual life with your children.”
 - b. Action and Communication
 - c. Vocation – Mother – “Help your husband in a way that no one can.”

Question: What is the difference between the vocation of father and mother?

iii. Scott Turansky – *Parenting is Heart Work*

1. “Children learn more than we realize.” (Turansky, 139.)

Question: How do children learn from their parents?

2. “Children learn from parents what faith looks like each day as little pressures, irritations, and responsibilities challenge their peace and joy.” (Turansky, 167).

Question: How do parents teach their children the faith?

3. Practical tools
 - a. Study God’s Word
 - b. Tell Children Bible Stories
 - c. Take kids to church.

Question: Why is the church important?

- d. Memorize scripture together.

iv. Paul Tripp – *Parenting: The 14 Gospel Principles that can Radically Change Your Family*

“Nothing is more important in your life than being one of God’s tools to form a human being.” (Tripp, 21).

Question: What does a tool do?

Read again Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 20–23,

“Your church was never designed to replace you, but to assist and equip you for this essential work.” (Tripp, 30)

Question: What is the primary tool for teaching about Jesus?

“They learn about the danger of sin and the rescue of God’s grace, they learn how to fight temptation, and they learn what is right and wrong. In Scripture they are taught God’s plan for their bodies, their minds, their relationship, their money and possessions, their sexuality, their relationship to authorities, and much more. But most of all they are confronted with the radical truth of a God of glorious love who sent his Son to provide rescue because we could not rescue ourselves.” (Tripp, 205-206).

Question; What does Paul Tripp encourage parents and children to do?

c. Cultural Liturgies: James K. Smith

- i. Formation
- ii. Education

Question: Where does Education occur?

- iii. Rituals
- iv. Not just head knowledge, but also the heart.

Question: What do you typically follow?

- v. Love
- vi. Worship

Question: How do worship and love go together?

Smith uses Martin Luther to point this out as he brings cultural practices, liturgy and—I would argue—formation together. Smith writes, “To say ‘you are what you love’ is synonymous with saying, ‘you are what you *worship*.’ The great Reformer Martin Luther once said, ‘Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your god.’ We become what we worship because we worship what we love.” (Smith, *You are What You Love*, 23).

‘Secular’ liturgies are fundamentally formative, and implicit in them is a vision of the kingdom that needs to be discerned and evaluated. From the perspective of Christian faith, these secular liturgies will often constitute a mis-formation of our desires—aiming our heart away from the Creator to some aspects of the creation as if it were God. Secular liturgies capture our hearts by capturing our imaginations and drawing us into ritual practices that ‘teach’ us to love something very different from the Kingdom of God. (Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88)

Read the first commandment and meaning. How does the first commandment relate to what one does as a parent? As a child? As a congregation?

How does the individual Christian home relate to the household of God?

- d. Secular World: Attachment Theory
 - i. Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Mate: *Hold on to Your Kids*.
 - ii. “In the psychological realm, attachment is at the heart of relationships and of social functioning.”

Question: When did God create Attachment? What caused attachment to break?

- iii. “Economics and culture today no longer provide the context for the natural attachment of children to their nurturing adults.” (Neufeld and Mate, 19).

Question: What is taking away children from parents?

- iv. Incompatibility of competing attachments.

Jesus captured the incompatibility of competing attachments and, too, the bipolar nature of attachment when he said, ‘No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the others’ (Matthew 6:24). When the loyalty is to the peers it will not feel right for the child to be on our side or to do our bidding. Children are not disloyal to us on purpose; they are simply following their instincts—instincts that have become subverted for reasons beyond their control.

Question: What is the reason attachment has been subverted?

Question: Are there any other groups that have been guilty of aiding in the subversion process?

Another attachment void has been created by the secularization of society. Quite apart from religion, the church, temple, mosque, or synagogue community functioned as an important

supporting cast for parents and an attachment village for children. Secularization has meant more than the loss of faith or spiritual rootedness; it has brought the loss of this attachment community. Beyond that, peer interaction has become a priority for many churches. For example, many churches divide the family as they enter the door, grouping members by age rather than by family. There are nurseries and teen groups, junior churches, and even senior classes. To those unaware of the importance of attachment and dangers posed by peer orientation, it seems only self-evident that people belong with those their own age. Large religious organizations have evolved to deal with only the youth or the young adult, inadvertently promoting the loss of multi-generational connections. (Neufeld and Mate, 36).

v. Attachment is important to physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

e. Law and Gospel Conclusion

i. Positives of the literature

1. Parents are primary educators,
2. church stands besides them, supports, and equips
3. Explains vocation and the law

ii. Weakness of the literature

1. Focuses too much on the law
2. Not enough gospel parenting

Question: Whose children are we, whether as parents or children ourselves?

Question: What model do we have as a parent?

Parenting begins with parents remembering that they live in God's kingdom ruled by God's lavish love in Christ. The Gospel is the basis for parenting, not some how-to book with a list of rules. God's undeserved love in Christ reminds parents that having a child is not a right but a blessing. Parents do not merely produce children (as an industry produces a product). They are entrusted with a child as a gift from God. All parenting flows from this gift of the heavenly father. (The Lutheran Study Bible, 2025).

APPENDIX FIVE

Tools from Chapter 3

Family Makeover Activity Three. Family Mission Statement

1. As parents, talk about the nonnegotiable things that you want the mission statement to convey. A good question to help you get started is, If someone described your family to another person, what would you like them to say about you?
2. Discuss these nonnegotiable values with your children. Make sure they completely understand and support these values.
3. Guide your family to create a mission statement that matches these agreed-upon values. While you want to involve your kids in this process, remember that you're the parents and must take the lead. God has given you the responsibility to lead your family because you have wisdom, experience and a larger perspective than your children.
4. When the mission statement is complete, involve your younger children by working together to make a family mission statement banner or poster. Proudly display your mission statement in a prominent place in your home.¹

Child Makeover Activity Two. Praying Together.

Prayer is simply a conversation with God.

1. *Newspaper prayer.* Try this idea at the beginning of the day as you're eating breakfast. Have each family take a portion of the newspaper and circle items that he or she feels need to be prayed for. Then ask family members to pray for the things they circled in the paper.
2. *Sentence Prayer.* You can help your children pray aloud by giving them a sentence to complete such as:
 - a. Lord, I thank you for...
 - b. Lord, forgive me for...
3. *Highs and Lows.* Ask your children what their "highs" were from the day, and then ask them about their "lows" from the day. Share your highs and lows as well, and then pray for them together.²

Family Worship from *Visionary Parenting*.

1. Set a Reasonable Goal—Time of day and how often. Write your family worship schedule down and post it in a visible location.
2. Mix it up with these items:
 - a. Reading and responding to the Bible
 - b. Praying for one another

¹ Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 36-37,

² Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home*, 87.

- c. Singing together
- d. Experiences and object lessons
- e. Catechism ³

³ Steps taken from Rienow and Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 101–111.

APPENDIX SIX

Connecting Family to the Church Year

“The rhythms of Advent and Christmas, Epiphany and Pentecost, Lent and Easter are a unique way to live into the life of Jesus.”¹

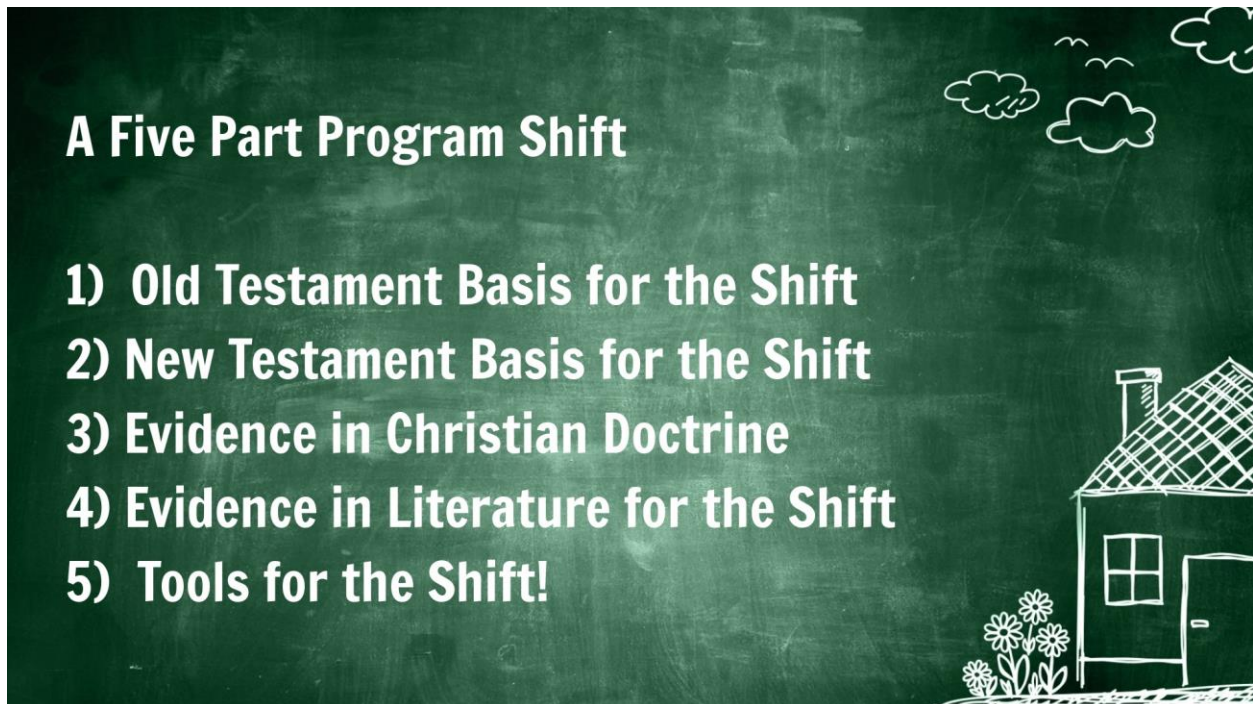
1. Incorporate the Colors of the Church Year into your home.
2. Advent – Make and use of an Advent Wreath during the season of Advent.
3. Lent—Observe a form of fasting.²
4. The *Lutheran Service Book* has a listing of the colors for each part of the church year on page x in the front part of the hymnal.
5. During Advent and Lent use the provided devotionals that connect to the midweek worship series.
6. Christmas Eve—read the Christmas Story.
7. Holy Week—Read the Passion Narrative and watch *The Passion of the Christ*.

¹ Smith, *You are What You Love*, 129.

² These are taken from Smith in *You are What You Love*, 129.

APPENDIX SEVEN

Bible Study Advertisements, Links to Classes, Picture Referred to in Chapter 1



Coming Soon: A Bible Study Series on what it means to be a Family-Centered, Church-Supported Congregation. My passion for the family developed back when I worked at Camp Luther and was able to interact with young children and their parents during Kindercamp. One of my goals while working at Camp was to become the Family Camp program assistant. That goal never panned out, but God in his infinite wisdom led me to Pastoral Office, where I have the opportunity to equip families for faithful living. In many of our families today, we struggle. We struggle with time and priorities. We struggle with where to put our energy. By and large, we as families today are tired and burnt out. We are constantly on the go and we soon run out of gas. We spend extraordinarily little time together actually in our family unit (at least that is what I observe from the culture). I have seen this over a decade in ministry. Our families are hurting, and I believe our families are looking for something meaningful to rest on. After all, families are looking to schools, sports, careers, friends, and even extended family to give them that meaning. Oftentimes, the church is the last place to look for meaning. The Church just seems to be looking to take more of our time. The Church seems to be just one more event to put on our calendar. Families are exhausted.

I have a passion for families. I want to see our families be better equipped for the challenges of life. I want to see our families equipped for passing the faith on to the next generation. I do not just want people to think that this is “Pastor’s job” to teach our kids the faith or the Sunday School teachers or even the VBS leaders. I want families, especially parents to see that they are the primary faith educators in their child’s life. I want families to be aware that they are the ones where they spend the most critical moments of life and where they can impact faith the most. During this Covid Pandemic we were forced to worship in our homes with our families. Sunday School was done at home and so was Confirmation, along with pretty much everything else. Maybe Covid even taught us something about the family unit and how important these faith conversations are.

So with all that being said, I am nearing the end of my Doctor of Ministry program, and my final project is entitled: *A Bible Study Series: The Family-Centered, Church-Supported Paradigm Shift of Raising Children in the Faith at Salem Lutheran Church*. I am inviting you the leaders, parents, grandparents, and other adult members of Salem Lutheran Church to this Bible Study Series on what it means to be a congregation that is Family-Centered, Church-Supported in raising children in the faith.

When you are in attendance you will be asked to take two surveys, one before and one after the series. You may be asked to participate in an interview so that I, as your pastor and researcher, will be able to further understand the impact of faith in your homes. In order to be interviewed you need to be:

- A person who can attend the Bible Study Series/Seminar held at Salem Lutheran Church
- You are willing to attend all parts of the bible study series in either successive weeks or watch the recorded version online.
- You are willing to be interviewed after the final session to share your thoughts on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm.

- You are willing to have your anonymous responses to the interview questions to be included in the final Major Applied Project (MAP)/Dissertation.
- You are over 18 years of age.
- You have a child in 4th grade or younger.

In order to sign-up for this series you can contact me at 1-218-280-0999 or 1-715-537-5949 or you can email me at: nielsenm@csl.edu. Please when it comes to my project email me at my school account.

April 18, 2021 Bible Study <https://youtu.be/qhfuklGgScM>

April 25, 2021 Bible Study <https://youtu.be/csZRfbaG35c>

May 2, 2021 Bible Study https://youtu.be/P5L9_fRd7VA

May 16, 2021 Bible Study <https://youtu.be/SkcJK73XwOY>

May 30, 2021 Bible Study <https://youtu.be/ai6ndNrcq1s>



APPENDIX EIGHT

Informed Consent Surveys

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: A Bible Study Series: The Family-Centered, Church-Supported Paradigm Shift of Raising Children in the Faith at Salem Lutheran Church

Researcher: Rev. Michael Nielsen

Email Address and Telephone Number: nielsenm@csl.edu/1-218-280-0999

Research Supervisor: Dr. William “Mart” Thompspon

Email Address: thompsonw@csl.edu

You are invited to be part of a research study. The researcher is a student at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri as part of the Doctor of Ministry program (D,Min.). The information in this form is provided to help you decide if you want to participate in the research study. This form describes what you will have to do during the study and the risks and benefits of the study.

If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the researcher. Do not sign this form unless the researcher has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This study is about understanding the family-centered, church-supported paradigm for raising children in the faith both before and after the five-part Bible study series.

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO BE IN THE STUDY?

You are invited to be in the study because you are:

- A person who can attend the Bible Study Series held at Salem Lutheran Church
- You are willing to attend all parts of the Bible study series in either successive weeks or a viewing the recorded series on a designated site on the Salem Lutheran Church website.
- You are willing to have your anonymous responses to the survey questions to be included in the final Major Applied Project (MAP)/Dissertation.
- You are over 18 years of age.
- You are a parent, leader, grandparent, or other invested person in the congregation.

If you do not meet the description above, you are not able to be in the study.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?

About 20 participants will be in this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researcher is a pastor at Salem Lutheran Church, Barron, WI

WILL IT COST ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You do not have to pay to be in the study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study, your participation will last about 5 hours which is about the time of the Bible study series. You will have to come to Salem Lutheran Church 5 times for the Bible Study Series, participate on Zoom, or catch up on the Salem Church website.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study and if you sign this form, you will do the following things:

- give personal information about yourself, such as your age, gender, and whether you are a parent or not.
- answer questions in a survey that relates to family-centered, church-supported paradigm, before and after the study.

While you are in the study, you will be expected to:

- Pay attention to the materials being presented.
- Attend all sessions of the Bible study.
- Tell the researcher if you want to stop being in the study at any time.

WILL I BE RECORDED?

Since you will not be asked to be interviewed, there is no need for you to be recorded. If you are participating on zoom, your face and comments will be recorded.

WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME?

Being in this study may or may not help you in how you provide faith education to your children. Information from this study might help researchers help others in the future.

ARE THERE RISKS TO ME IF I AM IN THIS STUDY?

No study is completely risk-free. However, we don't anticipate that you will be harmed or

distressed during this study. You may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable.

WILL I GET PAID?

You will not receive anything for being in the study.

DO I HAVE TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide not to be in the study and you can change your mind about being in the study at any time. There will be no penalty to you. If you want to stop being in the study, tell the researcher.

The researcher can remove you from the study at any time. This could happen if:

- The researcher believes it is best for you to stop being in the study.
- You do not follow directions about the study.
- You no longer meet the inclusion criteria to participate.

WHO WILL USE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT MY BEING IN THIS STUDY?

Any information you provide in this study that could identify you such as your name, age, or other personal information will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the original surveys.

The researcher will keep the information you provide in a locked file cabinet in Salem Lutheran Church, Barron, WI and only the researcher and research supervisor will be able to review the information.

Even if you leave the study early, the researcher may still be able to use your data, if the researcher feels that it contributes to the research and will be noted properly in the final dissertation.

In order to have accurate information for the sake of the study, the researcher will be asking you on the surveys to provide a random 6 digit number that you will use on both the before and after surveys.

Limits of Privacy (Confidentiality)

Generally speaking, the researcher can assure you that she/he will keep everything you tell him/her or do for the study private. Yet there are times where the researcher cannot keep things private (confidential). The researcher cannot keep things private (confidential) when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else,

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person might harm themselves or another, or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that

researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most states, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to hurt themselves or another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THIS STUDY?

You can ask questions about the study at any time. You can call the researcher if you have any concerns or complaints. You should call the researcher at the phone number listed on page 1 of this form if you have questions about anything related to this study.

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study. The researcher has talked with me about this study. The researcher has answered all my questions. I voluntarily agree to be in this study. I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related records as described above.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will get a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I attest that the participant named above had enough time to consider this information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX NINE

Informed Consent – Interviews

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: A Bible Study Series: The Family-Centered, Church-Supported Paradigm Shift of Raising Children in the Faith at Salem Lutheran Church

Researcher: Rev. Michael Nielsen

Email Address and Telephone Number: nielsenm@csl.edu/1-218-280-0999

Research Supervisor: Dr. William “Mart” Thompspon

Email Address: thompsonw@csl.edu

You are invited to be part of a research study. The researcher is a student at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri as part of the Doctor of Ministry program (D,Min.). The information in this form is provided to help you decide if you want to participate in the research study. This form describes what you will have to do during the study and the risks and benefits of the study.

If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the researcher. Do not sign this form unless the researcher has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This study is about understanding the family-centered, church-supported paradigm for raising children in the faith both before and after the five-part bible study series.

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO BE IN THE STUDY?

You are invited to be in the study because you are:

- A person who can attend the Bible Study Series/Seminar held at Salem Lutheran Church
- You are willing to attend all parts of the Bible study series/seminar in either successive weeks or a one-time seminar.
- You are willing to be interviewed after the final session to share your thoughts on the Family-centered, church-supported paradigm.
- You are willing to have your anonymous responses to the interview questions to be included in the final Major Applied Project (MAP)/Dissertation.
- You are over 18 years of age.
- You have a child in 4th grade or younger.

If you do not meet the description above, you are not able to be in the study.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?

About six participants will be in this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researcher is a pastor at Salem Lutheran Church, Barron, WI

WILL IT COST ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You do not have to pay to be in the study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study, your participation will last about 1.5 hours for the interview, plus the amount of time of the Bible study series/seminar. You will have to come to Salem Lutheran Church one time for the interview during the study and 1 or 5 times for the Bible Study Series/Seminar.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study and if you sign this form, you will do the following things:

- give personal information about yourself, such as your age, gender, and whether you are a parent or not.
- answer questions during an interview about **your faith forming practices at home.**

While you are in the study, you will be expected to:

- Pay attention to the materials being presented.
- Attend all sessions of the Bible study.
- Tell the researcher if you want to stop being in the study at any time.

WILL I BE RECORDED?

The researcher will audiotape your interview. The researcher will use the recordings in order to transcribe your responses. The researcher will identify the participant with a letter and will be assigned to each person's transcripts. The researcher will be the only who knows the identity of interviewee. The researcher will only use the recordings of you for the purposes you read about in this form. They will not use the recordings for any other reasons without your permission unless you sign another consent form. The recordings will be kept for seven years and they will be kept confidential. The recordings will be destroyed after seven years.

WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME?

Being in this study may or may not help you in how you provide faith education to your children. Information from this study might help researchers help others in the future.

ARE THERE RISKS TO ME IF I AM IN THIS STUDY?

No study is completely risk-free. However, we don't anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed during this study. You may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable.

WILL I GET PAID?

You will not receive anything for being in the study.

DO I HAVE TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide not to be in the study and you can change your mind about being in the study at any time. There will be no penalty to you. If you want to stop being in the study, tell the researcher.

The researcher can remove you from the study at any time. This could happen if:

- The researcher believes it is best for you to stop being in the study.
- You do not follow directions about the study.
- You no longer meet the inclusion criteria to participate.

WHO WILL USE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT MY BEING IN THIS STUDY?

Any information you provide in this study that could identify you such as your name, age, or other personal information will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the original audio recording and any documents generated during the study. Names, places, and other identifying information will be redacted. In any written reports or publications, no one will be able to identify you.

The researcher will keep the information you provide in a password protected computer, USB removable jump drive, and a locked file cabinet in Salem Lutheran Church, Barron, WI and only the researcher, research supervisor, and professional transcriber will be able to review this information.

The researcher will keep the recorded interviews you provide in his personal cell phone as well as the same protected computer and USB removable jump drive. Only the researcher will have access to them.

Even if you leave the study early, the researcher may still be able to use your data, if the researcher feels that it contributes to the research and will be noted properly in the final dissertation.

Limits of Privacy (Confidentiality)

Generally speaking, the researcher can assure you that she/he will keep everything you tell him/her or do for the study private. Yet there are times where the researcher cannot keep things private (confidential). The researcher cannot keep things private (confidential) when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else,

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person might harm themselves or another, or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most states, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to hurt themselves or another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THIS STUDY?

You can ask questions about the study at any time. You can call the researcher if you have any concerns or complaints. You should call the researcher at the phone number listed on page 1 of this form if you have questions about anything related to this study.

I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study. The researcher has talked with me about this study. The researcher has answered all my questions. I voluntarily agree to be in this study. I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related records as described above.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will get a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I attest that the participant named above had enough time to consider this information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

DO YOU WISH TO BE AUDIOTAPED IN THIS STUDY?

I voluntarily agree to let the researcher audiotape me for this study. I agree to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX TEN

Informed Consent Addendum

In my initial IRB I intended to focus my interviews on participants of the Bible study that had children who were in the 4th grade and younger. However, after completing my round of five Bible studies, I do not have enough parents of that age group that participated in the bible study lessons. During the Bible Study sessions, I had several elected church leaders who are also parents of children older than eight grade that had some great insight into our discussion. There are several reasons for this population not being in attendance:

- 1) The return to worship after the COVID-19 shut-down has been difficult for some families with the younger age children.
- 2) This population has historically been difficult to engage in the Bible studies of the church, even with topics that relate to them.

I would like to amend my IRB and will do so on the Informed Consent sheet to include parents/guardians of children in school and living at home, as well as, congregational elected leaders.

APPENDIX ELEVEN

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Before this Bible study series, you may not have been as aware of incorporating the Christian faith in the home. Now, looking back, can you tell me how you were perhaps doing some of this, whether or not you realized it at the time?

Tell me what was for you a major takeaway from the Bible study series.

How do you plan on implementing what you learned in the Bible study series in your homes?

How do you foresee Salem moving ahead with this paradigm shift?

Is there anything else that you haven't told me that you would like to about raising your child in the faith?

Interviewer Notes/Reactions:

APPENDIX TWELVE

Bible Study Series Survey – Family-Centered, Church-Supported

Research Question: Does a Bible Study Series on the family-centered, church-supported paradigm help equip Salem and her members for raising children in the Christian faith?

- 1) Circle One:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
- 2) What is your age?
 - a. _____
- 3) Do you have children?
 - a. Yes, if yes go to question 4.
 - b. No, if no go to question 5 immediately
- 4) How old are your children? Please select all that apply
 - a. 0–4 years old
 - b. 5–8 years old
 - c. 9–12 years old
 - d. 13–18 years old
 - e. Over 18
- 5) Please check yes or no to the following:
 - a. Congregational Elected Leader
 - b. Grandparent
 - c. Member
- 6) In your opinion who is the primary faith educator for children at Salem Lutheran Church?
 - a. Pastor
 - b. Mother
 - c. Father
 - d. Sunday School Teacher
 - e. Grandparent
- 7) In your opinion who should be the primary catechism instructor at Salem Lutheran Church?
 - a. Pastor
 - b. Mother
 - c. Father
 - d. Grandparent
- 8) In your opinion who should be the primary Bible teacher at Salem Lutheran Church?
 - a. Pastor
 - b. Mother
 - c. Father
 - d. Sunday School Teacher
 - e. Grandparent

- 9) Biblically who is the primary faith education for children?
 - a. Pastor
 - b. Parent
 - c. Grandparent
- 10) How much value do you put on family devotions at home?
 - a. Great Value
 - b. Medium Value
 - c. Little Value
 - d. No value
- 11) How many days a week do you currently spend time doing family devotions at home?
 - a. Every Day
 - b. 5–6 days a week
 - c. 3–4 days a week
 - d. 1–2 days a week
 - e. Never (if this is your answer go to question 13)
- 12) How much time do you spend on family devotions on a single day?
 - a. 1 hour
 - b. 30–59 min
 - c. 15–29 min
 - d. Under 15 min
- 13) Do you understand the terminology, “family-centered, church-supported paradigm” when it comes to raising children in the faith?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 14) How much would you agree that Salem should adopt this family-centered, church-supported paradigm to raising children in the faith?
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Slightly Agree
 - c. Neither agree or disagree
 - d. Slightly disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

Definition: Family-centered, Church-Supported.

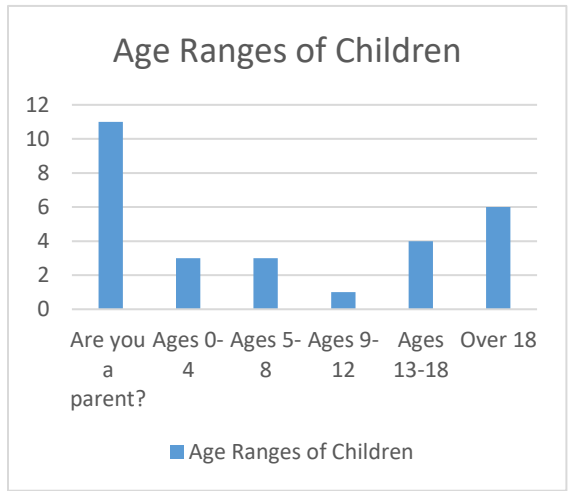
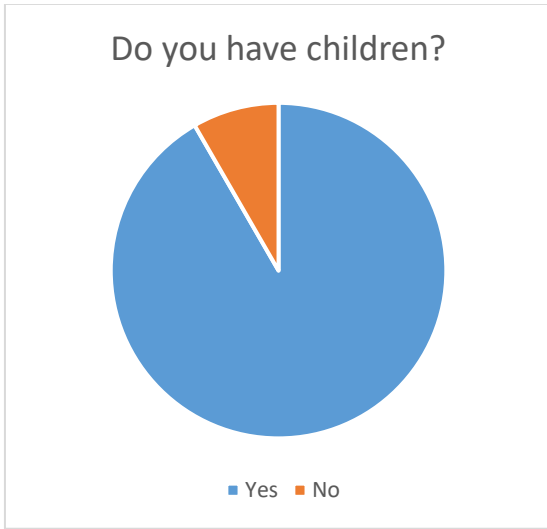
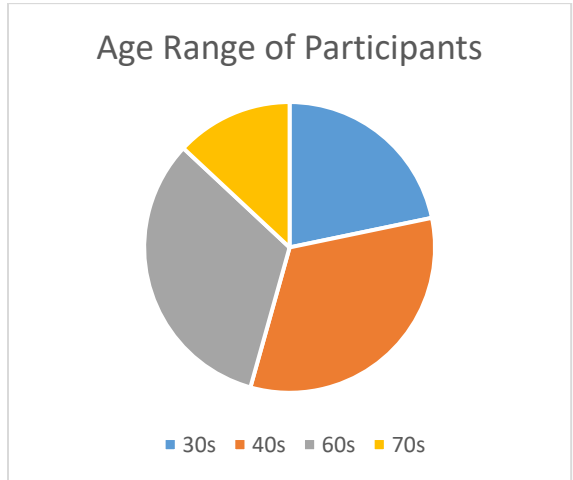
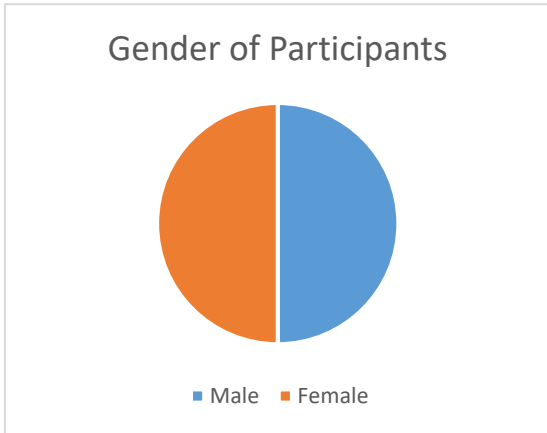
“The new model dictates that the church can do all it can to provide support and training for parents in the development of their kids’ faith in their homes.” Ben Freudenberg in *The Family Friendly Church*.

15) Which of the following tools would be helpful in the family-centered, church-supported paradigm of raising children in the faith? Check all that apply.

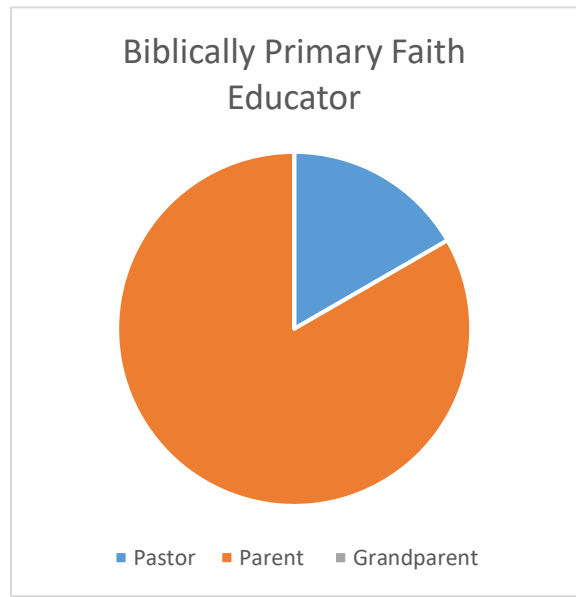
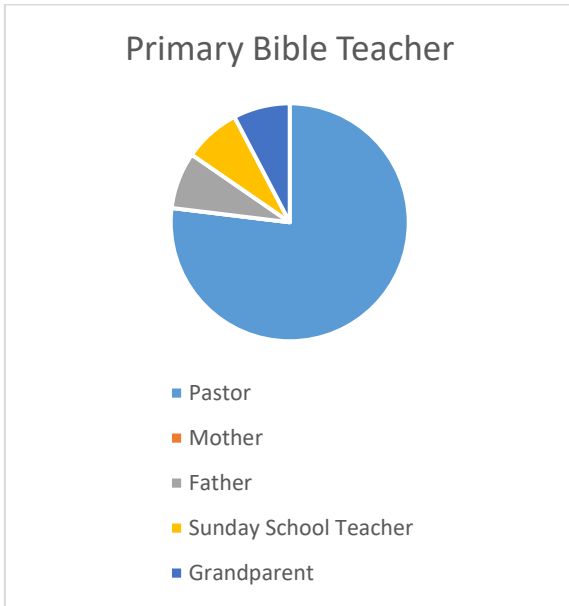
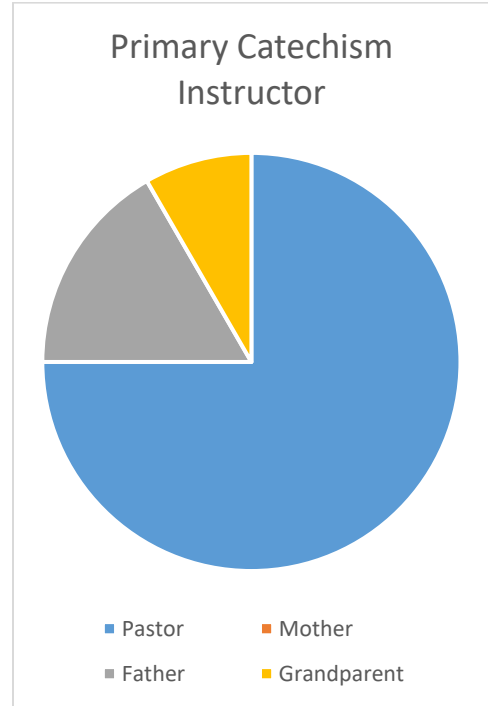
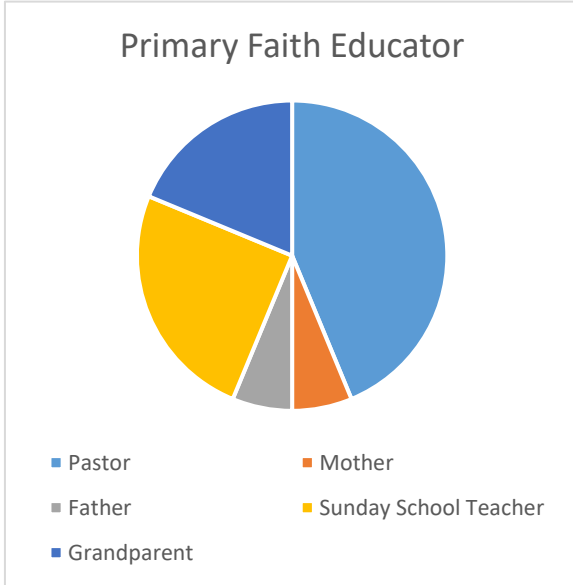
- a. Parenting Bible Study
- b. Parenting Mentors
- c. Catechism Classes for parents
- d. Catechism classes for other members
- e. At home devotional tools
- f. At home tools for teaching the catechism
- g. At home tools for teaching the Bible
- h. At home tools for family devotions
- i. At home tools for prayer

APPENDIX THIRTEEN

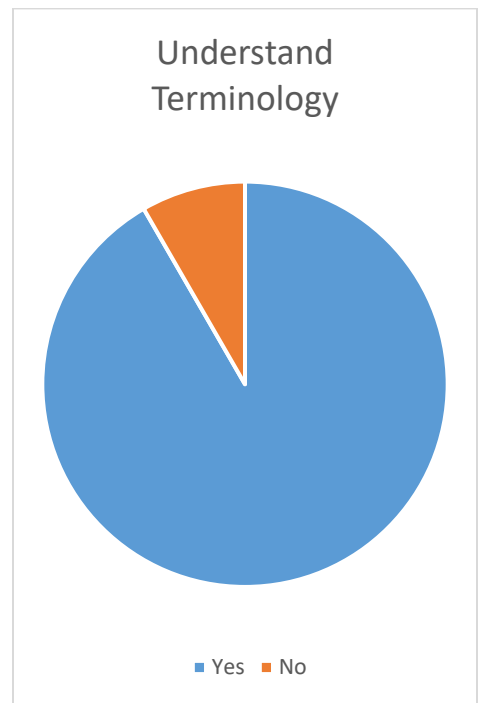
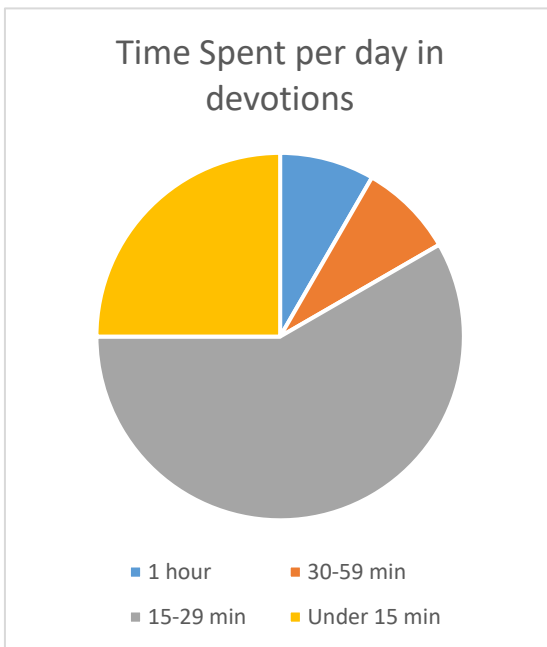
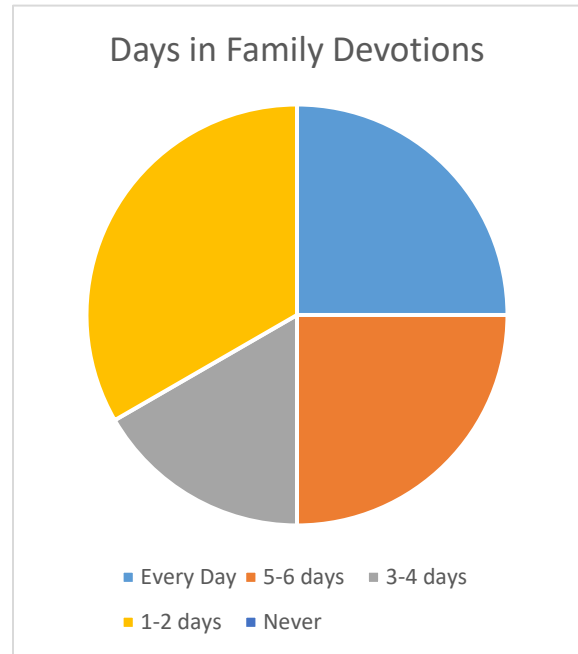
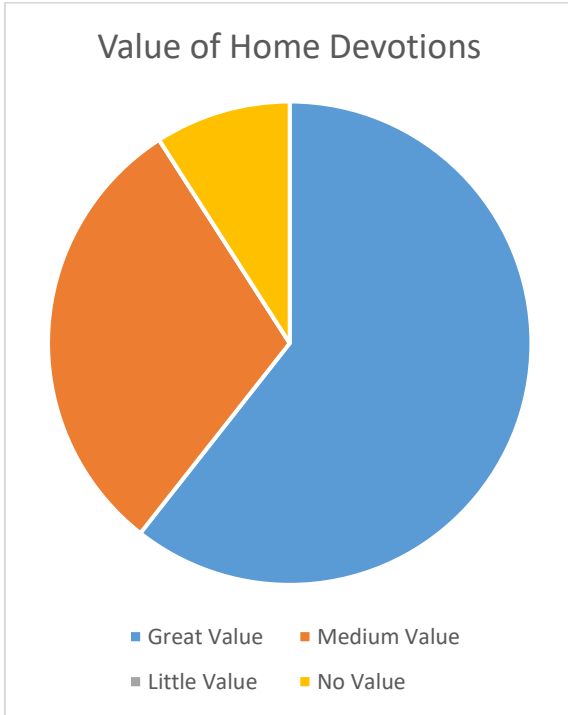
Pre-Study Survey Results



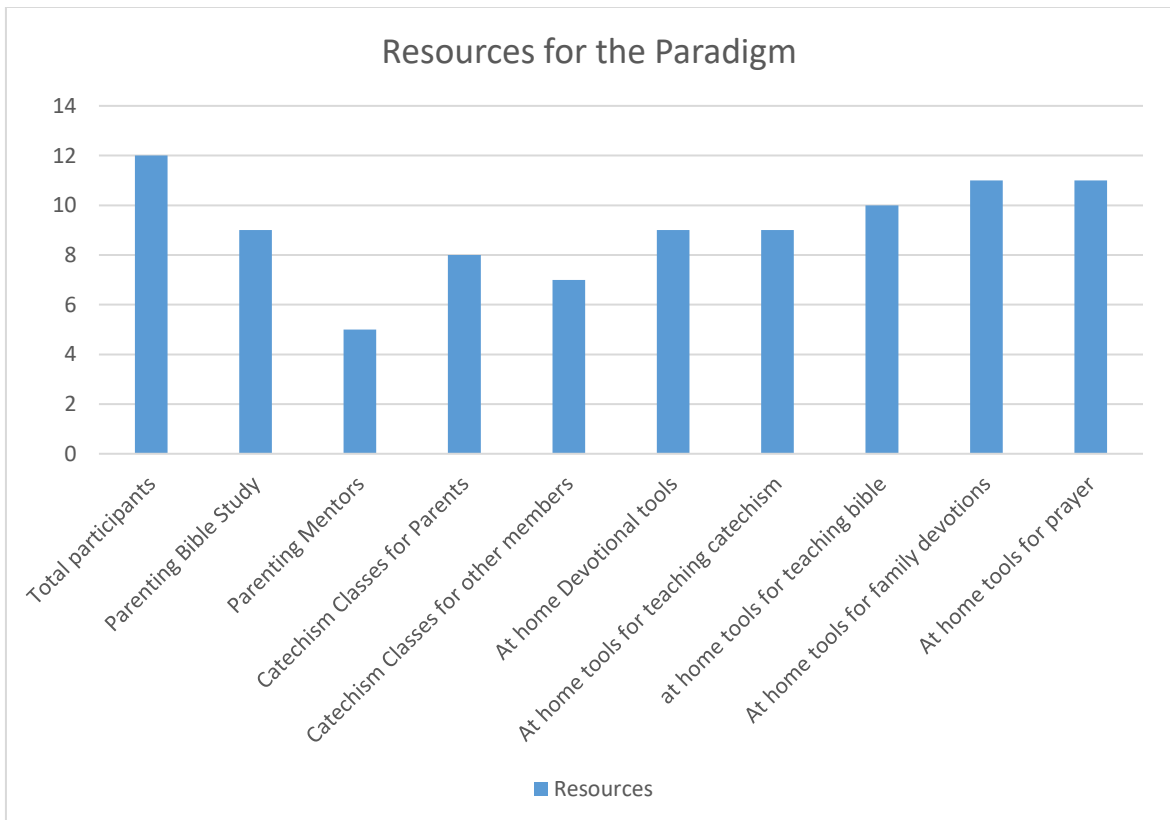
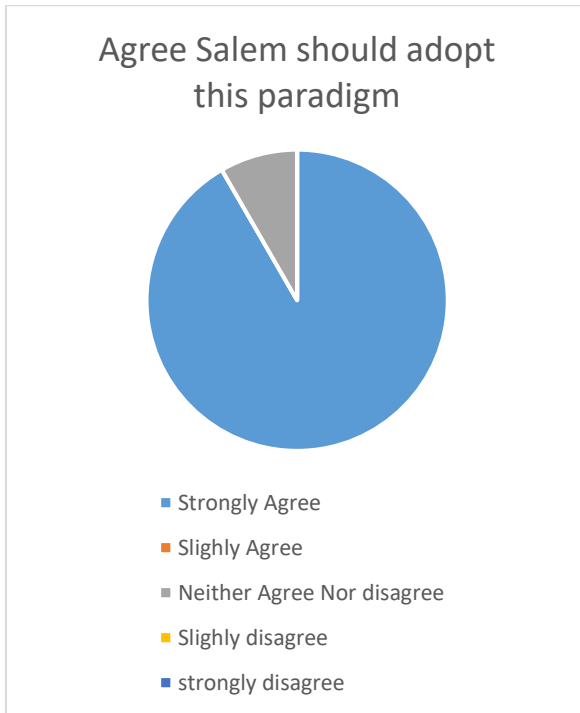
Pre-Study Results Continued



Pre-Study Results Continued

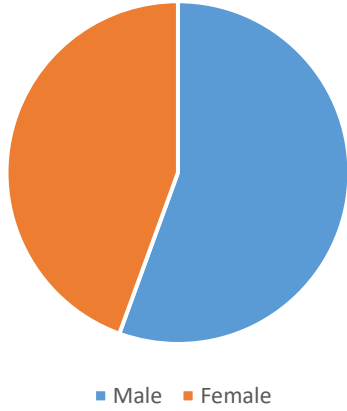


Pre-Study Results Continued

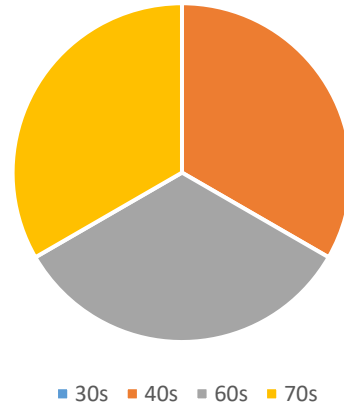


Post-Study Survey Results

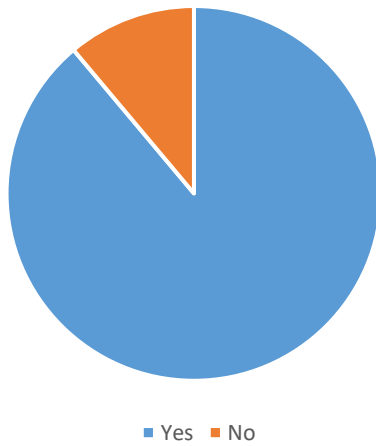
Gender of Participants



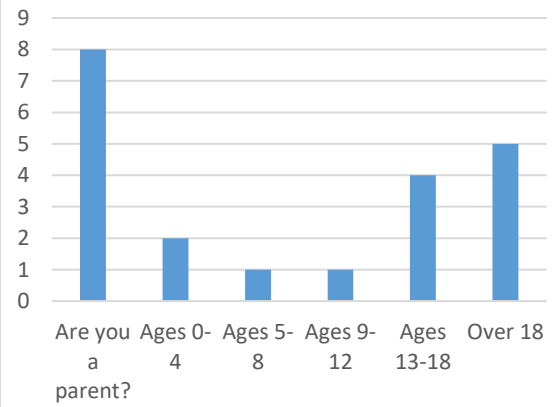
Age Range of Participants



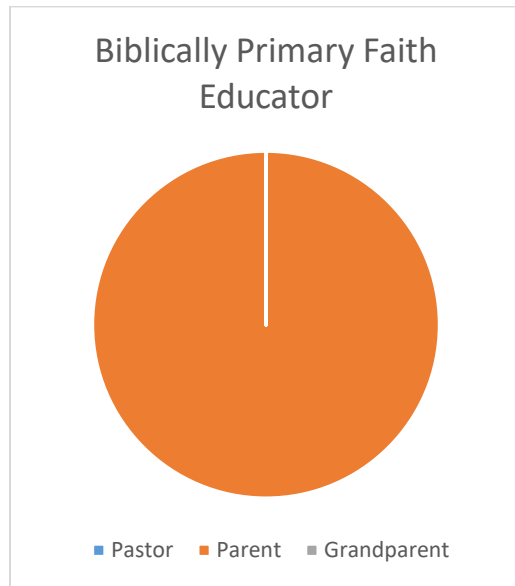
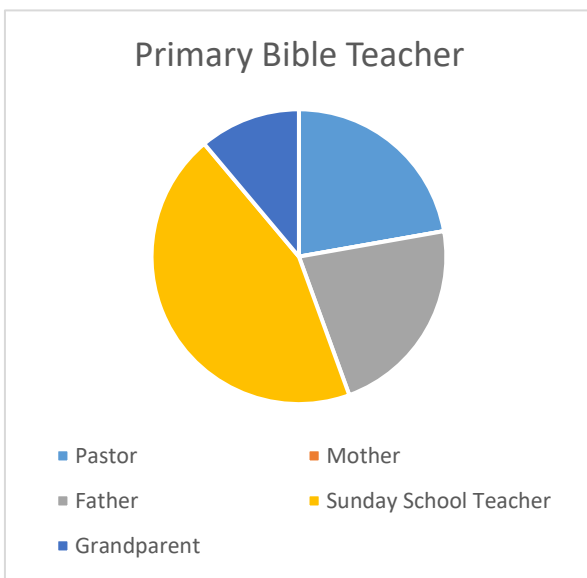
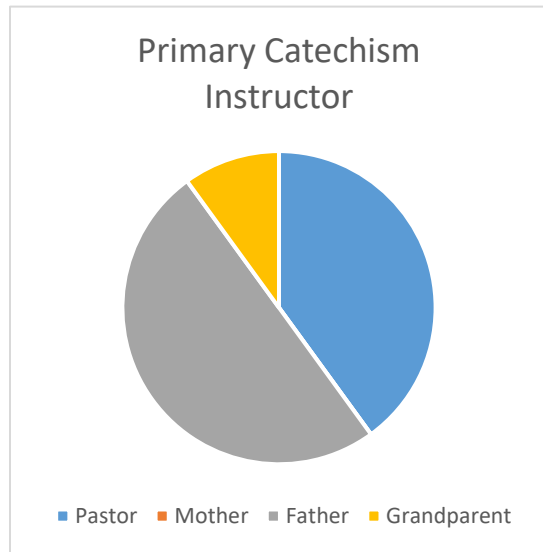
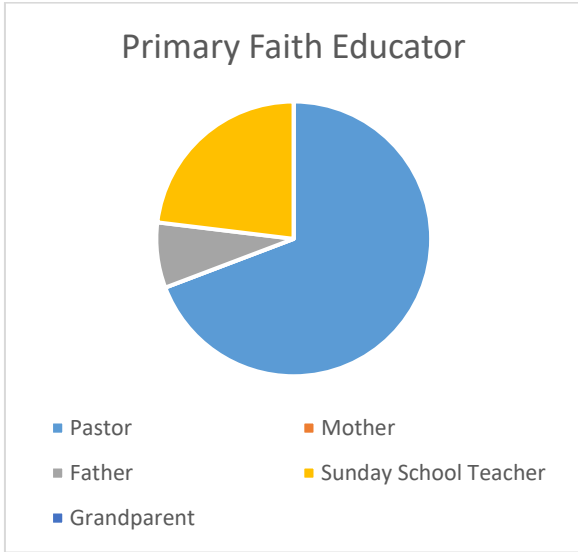
Do you have children?



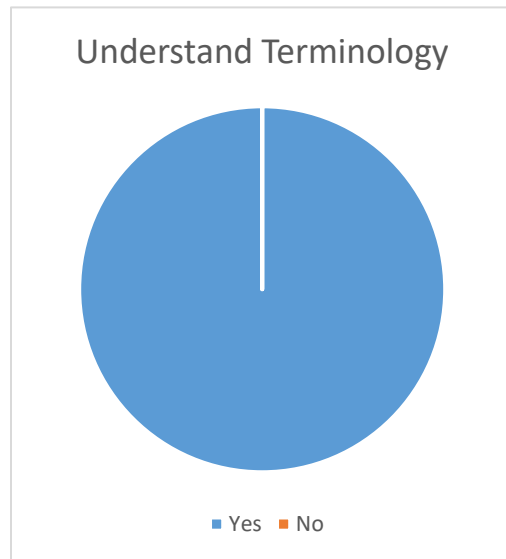
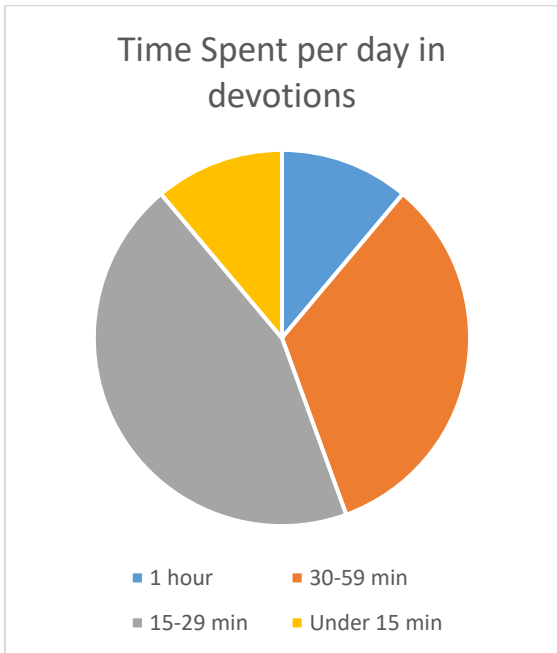
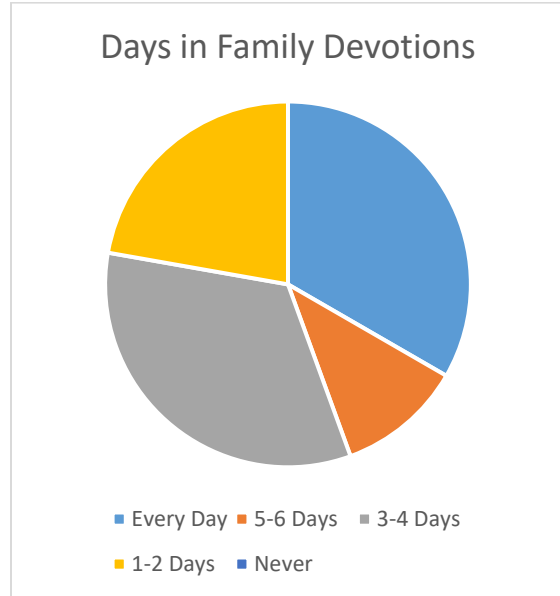
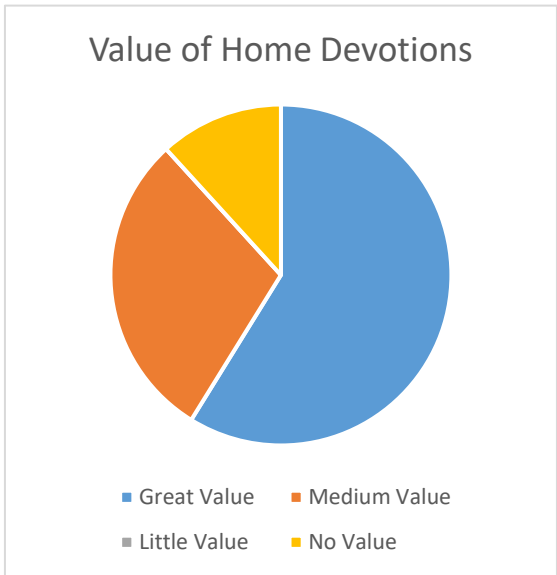
Age Ranges of Children



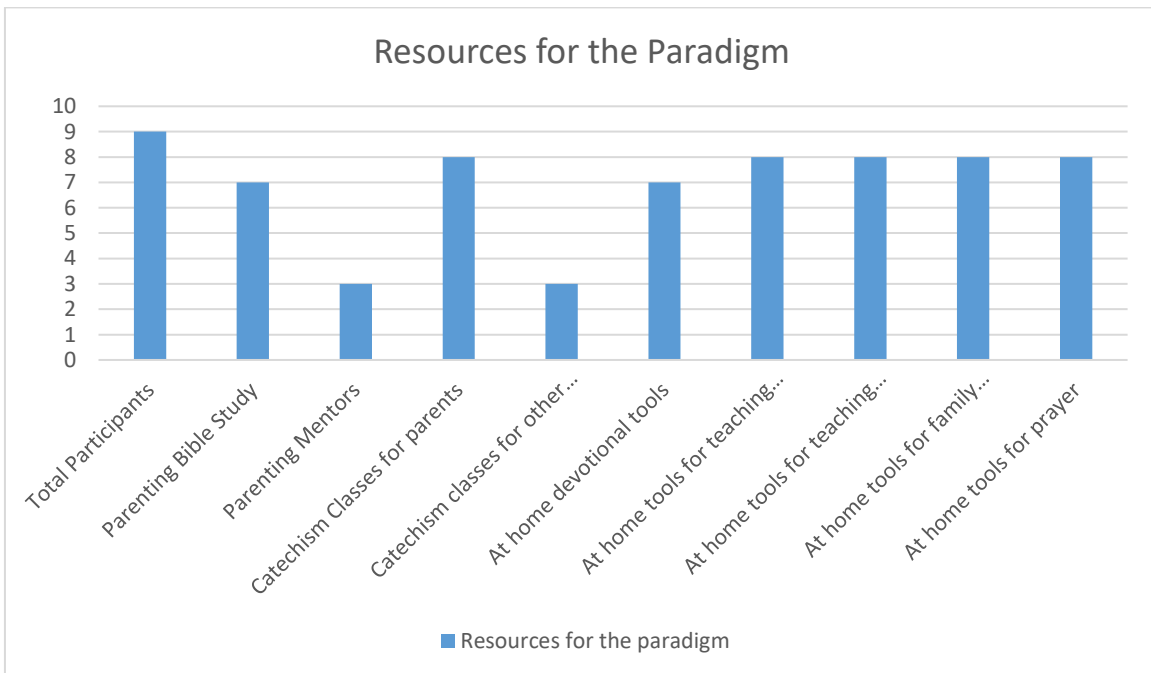
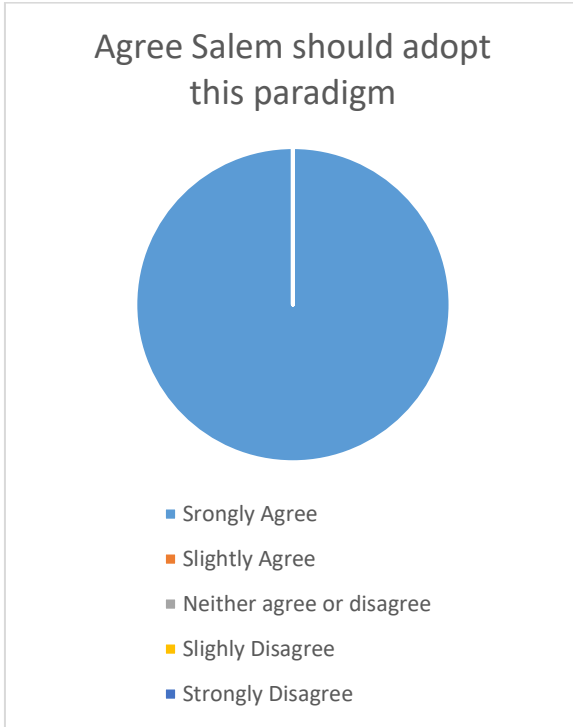
Post-Study Survey Results Continued



Post-Study Survey Results Continued



Post-Study Survey Results Continued



APPENDIX FOURTEEN

INTERVIEW THEMES

Participant 1: “We’ve always done some with prayer...over the years we’ve tried to do devotions with the kids.”

Participant 2: “We did have family devotions and table prayer and other prayers.”

Participant 3: “We did on Sunday or Sunday evenings, we did Bible Study ourselves and then we did like prayer and just talk about church and sermons and stuff like that.”

Participant 4: “We did work with our daughter with Bible studies....We did memory work because we had to for Sunday school. We wanted our daughter to shine.”

Theme: Family Faith Building was done at times.

Transformed: Family discipleship at times may start in small places.

Participant 1: “Kids always wanted to meet somewhere else and hurry let’s get it done.” “So many outside influences in the public school district and and then their friends.”

Participant 2: “You can really see the world against God, always, I mean, the devil is always working on our young people.”

Participant 3: “They want to be successful in school, I think, and sports.”

Participant 4: “I was very into sports, and I worked and stuff like that.”

Theme: Kids become attached to the things of this world.

Transformed: The devil is constantly placing temptations on children to become attached to idols over the true God.

Participant 1: “We need to help families see their priorities, what is more important you know we are only talking a few hours a week that we have, the church has the kids.”

Participant 2: “They’re busy lives, and I know that’s what they’re gonna say, Sunday is my down time.”

Participant 3: “It’s their priorities and I had, you know, think of some families that they’re busy with their jobs and stuff like that.”

Participant 4: “So there are people that are really busy doing things that have no impact on growing our youth.”

Theme: Priorities are mixed up.

Transformed: As sinners, parents and children, have a natural tendency to look elsewhere to place their fear, love, and trust.

Participant 1: “Well I think we have to reach out to the families to show them and train them and give them the resources that they need to teach their children and then be the support that they need.”

Participant 2: “I guess if the material is out there and it’s readily available I would hope that people would take advantage of it.”

Participant 3: “I realize I probably don’t do enough at home and having access to good like I don’t know the word...material to teach from....and not a lot of like five different things, just like one or two good thing.”

Participant 4: “I have really wanted to talk to you about some of the book that you had, some of the resources. I thought there was some really good information.” “Resources are key.”

Theme: Resources are valuable for families.

Transformed: God gave us the greatest resource in the Bible, but people need to be disciplined in order to disciple others.

Participant 1: “How important it is to stick with it and to encourage the kids to stick with Him.”

Participant 2: “It is very important that you bring your child up from very little, a small child and keep doing the same routine.”

Participant 3: “Realization...that it’s not just the church, it should be...but the parents.”

Participant 4: “We thought it important before, but we really found it important...”

Theme: Family-Centered Discipleship is important.

Transformed: Passing down the faith from one generation to the next in the homes is crucial in discipleship.

APPENDIX FIFTEEN

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FAMILY-CENTERED, CHURCH-SUPPORTED HOME FOR RAISING CHILDREN IN THE FAITH

Below, is one imaginary example of what this Family-Centered, Church-Supported Paradigm might look like in terms of a typical schedule of family activities in a Christian Home.¹ In this case, mom and dad are married and have three children, two in elementary school and one in kindergarten. This family also chooses to enroll their children in the local public school. Mom and dad both work outside the home.

6:00 AM – The day starts

6:30 AM – Family begins the day with a family breakfast with the devotional book *Portals of Prayer* provided by their LCMS congregation where they are members. Prayers are also said by each member of the family to bless their day.

7:00 AM – Mom leaves for work so that she can pick up the children from school.

7:30 AM – Dad drives children to school while having a conversation about listening to their teachers and playing nicely with their classmates.

8:00 AM–3:00 PM – Children are in their normal school day, while Mom and Dad are at work.

3:15 PM – Mom picks up children from school. While in the car she talks to the children about the blessings that God gave them that day.

3:45 PM – Mom is preparing dinner while the children are doing their homework and then entertaining each other.

¹ As noted earlier in the MAP, Christian homes come in all shapes and sizes. Besides the scenario depicted here, one could create examples of family-centered approaches of households led by single parents, grandparents, homes where only one parent works outside the home, and many others.

5:00 PM – Dad arrives home from work. Sit down for a family meal. Meal prayer is led by dad. (During the seasons of Advent and Lent—the Devotional and Family calendar are used that go along with the church’s sermon series. Each of these tools are provided by the LCMS congregation.)

5:45–6:00 PM Each family member participates in cleaning up after dinner.

6:00 PM Evening family devotions with the new hymnal *One and All Rejoice* which was offered by their local LCMS congregation at a discount to families. Devotional message is from *My Devotions* provided to the family by the LCMS congregation.

7:00 PM Children may go to bed and further discussion of the day occurs with some facilitating of what may have been learned at school, may not be what the church and the family embraces.

On a Wednesday night once a month, this family participates in the family evening at their LCMS congregation. They meet at 5:00 PM for a family meal, where the family eats together. Following the meal there is a Bible story for the entire family. After this Bible story, the children are separated into groups for more faith-building time, and pastor has a time of equipping the parents how to teach their children using the resources that the church provides.

This congregation chose to do the family night only once a month so as not to pack more into the calendars of their families. The congregational leadership understands the importance of time for families, as well as the need to train families for discipleship at home.

APPENDIX SIXTEEN

A SAMPLE 20-MINUTE DEVOTIONAL TIME

In the Nielsen family, each night at 6:00 PM we sit down for our family devotion time. We begin our devotions with a selected liturgy from *One and All Rejoice* (OAR) hymnal. For the sake of this sample, I will share what are doing currently, the week of October 3, 2021.

“Thanksgiving” liturgy invocation.

Scripture reading and message comes from *My Devotions*.

Each devotion from *My Devotions* provides a discussion question.

On October 5, 2021, the devotion was talking about how Chocolate and God’s Word are both beneficial. Each of these we can also enjoy.

The question provided was: “What are your favorite things made with chocolate?” Each member of the family shared their favorite thing made with chocolate. Several of my children included chocolate ice cream, chocolate milk, and chocolate candy bars. The second question was “What are your favorite Bible Verses?” Several answered John 3:16, whereas I answered Romans 1:16. We were able to discuss how these important passages relate to living our lives.

Following the Scripture Reading and Message we sing our hymn that is scheduled out and relates to the church year. This singing of hymns has become a favorite in our hymn amongst many of us. We read through a question and answer from *Luther’s Small Catechism*. We then go through our scheduled memory work verse, where we all learn the verse by heart over the course of a two-week time span.

Following our memory work, we conclude with the Apostle’s Creed, Lord’s Prayer, other prayers—including at times, prayers for others, blessing and Benediction.

To highlight a sample outline:

Thanksgiving liturgy (OAR page 130)

Scripture reading and message from *My Devotions*

Hymn

Catechism and Memory Work

Apostle’s Creed

Lord’s Prayer

Other prayers

Concluding prayers on OAR page 131

Blessing and Benediction

As noted in the title above, this takes only approximately 20 minutes an evening. It is the consistent, daily use that adds to the impact.

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