

THE CLARION CALL

DISCIPLESHIP OF THE HOME
NOW!

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THE DECADE OF
disciple
making 2020
2030
Initiative of the WEA

SHIFTING



Almost every day of the week the church building is filled with people. The church office is a hive of activity. Doves of people attend to a myriad of different needs. There's a constant stream of worship services and other weekly ministries. It's a red flag when someone misses church more than a couple of times.

That is the church life we all know of. Until recently, that was 'church' to us. In many ways, it still is.

But now, the silence is deafening! Church buildings are deserted and eerily quiet throughout the week. Something within us wants to yell out loud, 'we want our church back!'

We are missing the kind of church we have been accustomed to.

The lockdown has changed our church life drastically. Almost overnight we were forced out of the familiar church-centered congregational life and into a home-based situation we are still trying to piece together. We have gone from the church gathered to the church scattered.

Church leaders around the world are trying to figure out how to carry on many of the same ministries (such as Sunday school, youth ministry, and other age-segregated ministries) but without any of the same infrastructure.

The general approach to ministry is no longer 'come to church and we'll minister to you'. Instead, the church is now placed in a position of having to find ways 'to go to' the members and minister to them where they are - in homes.

What we are seeing is that the home has become a vital ministry centre and a key strategic part of the church ministry structure. All of a sudden, variables such as the spiritual maturity of Christians in the home, the state of relationships between family members, and the physical and emotional challenges the family is facing, have become important considerations for church leadership. The success of the church will depend more and more on the homes of its members. Will they be ready?



For the majority of churches globally, 'doing family ministry' is usually limited to specific programmes aimed at specific felt needs for families. However, what has been missing is a consistent and systematic effort to build the ministry capacity of the home.

While the church has traditionally assumed the primary responsibility for the faith formation of children (through Sunday school and youth ministry), the parents have tended to take a more passive role. As a result, most parents are simply not ready to take on the role of family discipleship now.

CONSIDERING HOME

This lack of training in family discipleship can function as a negative feedback loop. Because there is a lack of discipleship at home, family relationships become strained and conflict builds. As conflict builds, and relationships deteriorate, the capacity for doing family discipleship diminishes, and even attending church-based programmes may no longer become an option. Something has to change.

Considering these challenges, some might say that focusing on home discipleship is too lofty a goal. After all, they might argue, our primary focus should be on finding ways to minister to homes during the short lockdown period, and then we can go back to 'church as normal.'



Certainly, we do need to give our immediate attention to the pressing needs that families are facing as a result of the pandemic. However, we strongly believe that there is a real danger of being so focused on the pressing needs of the hour that we then miss out on the opportunity God may be presenting His Global Church through this crisis.

Perhaps the question we should all be asking right now is, 'Has the church been as effective as it could be in carrying out its God-given functions while largely ignoring the active participation of the homes?'

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Not since the Reformation has the home become such a focal point for church ministry.

On the one hand, the Global Church can opt for quick-fixes to deal with the lack of connection between the church and the home, hoping to quickly get back to 'normal' after the crisis period. In this scenario, the goal will likely be finding the best way to continue to deliver the church-centric ministries in the new context of the crisis.

On the other hand, a far better option would be for the Church to use this time to step back and assess the existing state of the home in fulfilling its biblical role and responsibilities (now laid bare by the present circumstances). Furthermore, while working to meet the immediate needs of families, the Church should take a long-term view of investing in making the home a key effective discipleship centre well beyond the pandemic time.

SEIZING THE MOMENT

The Global Church stands on the verge of a historic opportunity. Released to a large extent from a preoccupation with onsite church ministries, the church is seeing the need to shift the centre of gravity for ministry to something more home-based. More than ever before, the church now has both a better focus and a stronger motivation to look at this major missing piece of the corporate church discipleship structure called 'Family Discipleship'. The time for the Church to restore a culture of family discipleship has come.



THE WEA MOMENT

WEA can seize this moment by rallying its global network to restore the culture of family discipleship back to the body, while at the same time meeting the immediate needs of the network churches to minister to home-bound congregations.

The WEA can make its mark by making family discipleship an integral part of its Decade of Holistic Disciple-making.

Note: The WEA Leadership has taken a concrete step towards this direction by preparing the [Family Discipleship Quick Response Toolkit](#) for ministry at home. You may find this [HERE](#).



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

In what ways do you consider the home as a place for ministry (ministry center)?

What do you think we need to do more in the church in order to make this happen?

What challenges do we expect to face in pursuing the family discipleship emphasis?



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