

Intergenerational Small Groups

“Practical Practices for Children’s Ministry”

CBFNC

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Rev. David Durham

“Where else are multiple generations being drawn together for an abundant life in the presence of God?” – L. Gregory Jones and Kevin R. Armstrong in
Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry

Traditional Small Group Structure Today

- Christian Education - Age Based Classes (Sunday school, Bible studies, etc.)
- Rise of Small Group Ministry over the last two decades
- Small Group Ministry Mirrors Age Based Classes
 1. Age/Gender Segregated (women’s, men’s, young couples, etc)
 2. Task Oriented (prayer, book study group, Bible study, missions focused)
- Most Common Small Groups
 - Bible study
 - Fellowship group
 - Prayer Group
- Where are the Children?
- How do children see these types of small groups?
- Why not add children?
 - First Century Church was not age segregated –children were simply part of the life of the community

Spiritual Awareness

- Research has shown that teenagers involved in all-church worship (IG worship) are more consistent with faith in high school and college years.
- The more students serve and build relationships with younger children, more likely their faith will stick.
- Students do not feel supported by adults in their congregation.
- Teenagers feel welcomed and valued when adults in congregation show interest in them.
 - Drawn from “Sticky Faith” by Kara Powell, Brad Griffin, Cheryl Crawford

"The conscience of children is formed by the influences that surround them; their notions of good and evil are the result of the moral atmosphere they breathe."—

John Paul Richter

Challenges & Obstacles to Intergenerational Small Groups...

- Preconceived Notions about Children
 - Short attention spans/easily distracted
 - Have to “Dumb down” the material
 - Discipline
 - Another “Add on”
- Other Challenges
 - Understanding Different Generations
 - Parents Want a Break!
 - Lack of Knowledge about biblical intergenerational principles
 - Uncommitted Leadership (Top down)

Is Your Church Ready?

- “Family” is an intergenerational word!
- “Intergenerational” – Not DO, but BE
- Get Leadership On Board – Priority #1
- Practice Run Events
 - Mentoring Programs
 - Family retreats
 - Intergenerational Mission Projects
 - Fellowship Meal integration
 - Short-term test Sunday school class
- Assess the Current Conditions of your Church
 - Already Existing Small Group Structure – Key is Balance
 - Non Existing Small Group Structure – Find the passionate “Intergenerationalists”
- Key Characteristics of Successful IG Small Groups
 - Flexible
 - Intentional
 - Strategic
 - Good Communication
 - Don’t Limit the Ministry
- Is it okay to have BOTH intergenerational and age specific small groups? YES!

"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." — James Baldwin

Different Intergenerational Small Group Models

- Model One: 4 W's – Welcome, Worship, Word, Witness
 - From Daphne Kirk's, "Developing Children's Small Group Curriculum" article

- Model Two: Early Church - Fellowship Meal, Worship, Kid's Break Out/Adult Discussion, Communion, Closing

- Model Three: "Village Groups" – Gather, Purposeful, Help Become better disciples, Share their lives together
 - Based on the quote, "It take a village to raise a child."
 - From Bill Tenny-Brittian, "Is the Church Driving a Wedge in our Families?" article

- Two Options – Children Remain or Kid's Break Out?
 - Kid's Break Out - Sing, Say, Pray, Play
 - (from "Intergenerational Cell Groups" by Janet Busboom)

 - Children Remain
 - Activities within the gathering space

- "Musts" : Trust, Responsibility, Respect for all Ages
- Remember the Goal: Relationships (family!)
- 3 to 6 Month Start – reevaluation, recommitment
- Children add a new level of joy, love, and faith to small groups

Where do I Start? - Questions to Ask...

- If you were to place your church's ministry on continuum between IG engagement and age-related relationships, where would you fall? Children's ministry?
- What would you add or subtract from your current ministry to make it more "intergenerational"?
- Which of the challenges and obstacles from above scream out at you? What can you do to guard against or resolve these?
- Who needs to be on board in your congregation? Who do you have that is passionate about this "intergenerational" possibility? How do you promote to congregation?
- Develop a team, coordinate a plan, and get started!

Intergenerational Biblical Resources

- Joshua 24:14-16 – “As for me and my family...” – Family Faith
- 1 Samuel 3 – Intergenerational relationship between Eli and Samuel
- Psalm 78:1-8 – Passing down of stories and faith
- Matthew 19:13-14 – “Let the little children come to me”
- Mark 9:33-37 – “Faith of a child”
- Titus 2:1-10 – Role Models of Faith

Additional Resources

Helpful Website

- “Christianity Today” Website – www.SmallGroups.com

Books on Intergenerational Ministry

- *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community, and Worship* by Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross; Westmont, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2012.
- *Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry* by Gregory L. Jones and Kevin R. Armstrong; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006.
- *Intergenerational Faith Formation: All Ages Learning Together* by Mariette Martineau, Joan Weber, and Leif Kehrwald; New London, CT: Twenty Third Publications, 2008.
- *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to* www.com by Peter Menconi; Littleton, CO: Mt. Sage Publishing, 2010.
- *The Naked Truth About Small Group Ministry* by Randall Neighbour; Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 2009.
- *The Multigenerational Congregation: Meeting the Leadership Change* by Gil Rendle; Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2002.

Articles on Intergenerational Ministry/Small Groups

- Carroll, Jackson W. “Bridging Worlds: The Generational Challenge to Congregational Life.” *Circuit Rider* 22:5 (September – October 1999).
- Ortberg, John, Scottie May, Rachel Gilmore, etc. “Effective Intergenerational Small Groups: Practical Ministry Skills.” www.SmallGroups.com , 2010. ***
- Powell, Kara, Brad Griffin, and Cheryl Crawford. “Sticky Faith.” *Immerse Journal* (September - October 2011).
- Tenny-Brittian, Bill. “Is the Church Driving a Wedge in Our Families?” <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2006/is-church-driving-wedge-in-our-families.html?start> , 2006.