

What is a Family Integrated Church?
Conference Message
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The following message, "What is a Family Integrated Church," was delivered by Scott Brown at the Regional Uniting Church on Family Conference in Anderson, Indiana in 2008.

What Is a Family Integrated Church?

Acts 2:37-47 outlines a number of the beautiful aspects of the architecture of the church of God, how it functions and what it does. We should always be looking back to the architecture that is found in Scripture which explains what we, as the people of God, are and what it is that we should do.

I am amazed at the way God has designed to rescue sinners. He convicts people from the heart that they have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. They are pierced to the heart and they repent. No man can make a person repent. Only God can do that.

Those who repent are enfolded into this eternal family that has its expression in the local church. God has made it so that for all people of all nations, when they are pierced to the heart and repent, they come and are joined with this fellowship of believers. We are baptized into one body. There is one Lord, one faith and one baptism. God brings us into this precious family and there, all life long, he takes care of us.

We may, hopefully, come to faith early on and so that we might have decade after decade of life in the fellowship of believers in the local church. And there we would be nursed to maturity in the faith and there God extends our family in an absolutely marvelous way to include dozens of spiritual fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters.

Last night we were reading Psalm 89:15-16 which captured so much of what I hope to begin within this session. The psalmist says, "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound. They walk in the light of your countenance and in your name they rejoice all day long and in your righteousness they are exalted." We are part of this great family of God. Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound and who experience it together in the fellowship of believers.

As we consider what we are advocating a family integrated church would look like we must be very, very careful. The Bible says that the Church is the body of Christ. It would be a great sin against God to misrepresent the body of Christ. It is important therefore that our description of the church comes from the pages of Scripture. Once the church is accurately described, it is the responsibility of believers and church leaders in every generation to represent the church as God has revealed it. And what God has revealed is a beautiful building.

Four statements explaining what we mean by family integration

This evening I want to speak about one element of that architecture. That element is family integration. I want to give you four statements that explain what we mean by a family integrated church. First, I want to talk about the fact that family integration is merely one element in this great building. Second, I want to talk about the foundation and the preservation of the architecture requires fidelity to the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. Third, I would like to give you 14 characteristics of what we are advocating in a family integrated church. And then, finally, I would like to wrap up by talking about the product, the result of this kind of architecture.

Statement 1

So that is where we are going. Well, let's go to the first point: Family integration is one element in a building with beautiful architectural design. And the picture that we have just seen here in Acts chapter two shows elements of this design. Here you see continual devotion to the apostles' teaching, continual devotion to fellowship and to worship and breaking bread. There is a Spirit about it as well in that there is fear and awe in the congregation. We pray that God would give us this in all of our congregations.

And then there is unusual care for one another. Those who believed were selling their property and possessions and distributing to those who had need. They were together with one mind and one heart and they had favor with all the people such that the Lord was adding to their number day by day.

They lived their lives together with a deep conviction of their sins and a sense of God's love and mercy and his saving grace.

The Church is a well appointed building. It is the body of Christ. It is many, many things. But family integration is just one element in the structure that God is building. The Church is much bigger than age integration.

Statement 2

The second statement that I want to make is that the foundation and the preservation of this beautiful architecture depend on your beliefs about Scripture. How do you view Scripture? The biblical basis for an age integrated ministry is the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture which states that Scripture alone is sufficient to tell us all things necessary for faith and practice, that

everything that we need to go forward in Church life is found in Scripture and we need nothing else to inform us in the worship of God.

The apostle Paul speaks of this idea a number of times in his letter to Timothy. Paul wanted Timothy to know three things. First of all, he wanted him to know that Scripture was perfect. He said to him, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Paul wanted Timothy to know that if he was to engage in handling the bride of Christ, he was to use Scripture alone and that he could know that it was perfect.

The second thing that the apostle wanted Timothy to know is that there was a way that we should engage ourselves in the Church. He said in 1 Timothy 3:15, “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the household of God which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

The apostle not only wanted Timothy to know that Scripture was perfect and that it was all he needed, but that there was a way that we ought to conduct ourselves in the household of God. It is not our house. It is God’s house. And it should be conducted in a way that is consistent with his thoughts.

And then, thirdly, he taught Timothy that there was a fixed pattern of Church life. And this passage of Scripture will be critical this weekend as we are together. We will recite it together. We will memorize it together. In 2 Timothy 1:13 Paul says this to Timothy. “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

Paul teaches here that there is a pattern. He uses the Greek word, τυπος (too’-pos), which means to make an impression. It is to strike and make a mark with a blow just like a dye would make on the minting of a coin. This is the imagery that the apostle Paul is using here. The dye has to be harder than the metal so that the metal is impressed, so that the metal moves and not the dye. The metal does not become what it desires to become, but it becomes what the minter wants it to be. In the same way, the church is not to be molded the way it desires to be, but rather as God would have it molded.

This is just another way of the apostle instructing Timothy that God has authority over his Church through the Word of God.

Thus, the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is the critical and fundamental principle. If we can’t accept that principle then we will have many arguments about what we should do in Church life.

What is the contemporary significance of this doctrine? Well, in my generation, the baby boomers, we value one thing greater than all else: creativity. Go do the next new thing.

Whatever the mind can conceive the body ought to do. That is the principle of my generation. I am going to call it creative Christianity.

The result of fifty or sixty years of creative Christianity is that the Church is indistinguishable from the world in the way that she conducts herself. Many still believe that it is ok for modern Christians to create the Church in every generation for that generation.

Creative Christianity tries to find the best way to engage the culture, to find the need and meet it, not by and with the Scripture, but by our own understanding and ideas. However, this principle has a fatal flaw in its DNA when you apply it to church life: it starts with man. It does not start with God.

Biblical Christianity, biblical Church life begins with God. There is a way that God desires for His people to conduct themselves in His house. It is not for each generation to recreate the Church after its likeness.

On the contrary, it is for us to establish Christian culture and practice in our generation that which come from the eternal, that which is perfect, that which is the *τυπος* (too'-pos), the pattern for Church life.

In the Confession that we use in the National Center for Family Integrated Churches, we try to explain these things this way: "We should not treat His Word as inadequate for church and family life by supplementing His completed revelation with humanistic psychology, corporate business models, and modern marketing techniques."

This principle that all of what we desire in Church life rests on the doctrine of sufficiency of Scripture, makes it plain that the activities in the worship of the Church should be shaped by the commands and the patterns of the Word of God and not the fruit of the inventions or the patterns of contemporary culture. We may only worship God as He has commanded us to worship Him. If we believe that it is permissible to create the Church as we want it and to add all of our ideas, then we need to concenter what that means for the Church.

This belief makes the Church subject to the next new great communicator or the next powerful personality or the next hot thing that makes people desire to come. And it makes the Church subject to the world. That is the fatal flaw in the DNA of the Church today.

We have to decide whether we will emphasize biblical patterns or pragmatic patterns that arise out of the creative brain of the next leader that arises.

Statement 3

There is a third statement that I want to bring to us to help us to understand this whole subject, now that we have laid this foundation. I would like to move through 14 characteristics of family integrated churches which the NCFIC is seeking to develop.

First Characteristic: Orthodox Churches

Number one, we seek to develop orthodox churches that are faithful to biblical theology and practices.

Now it ought to be obvious to everyone that this thing that people are calling a movement is a doctrinally oriented movement. And although many who identify with us have particular doctrinal orientations, the NCFIC promotes particular doctrines that need to be held to. Let me give you some of the things that we promote in all of our ministry wherever we go.

First of all, we teach that the gospel is the central message of the Church. We teach that we have been charged with a duty and that is to teach to all that we come across everything that Christ has taught. Matthew 28 makes this very clear in the Great Commission.

And what do we teach? We teach the gospel. If the gospel is not the center of these churches, then these churches will fall and become just another piece of rubbish in the landscape of creative Christianity.

Orthodox biblical ecclesiology is lived out, meaning that we look to Scripture for the things that we do in the Church.

Biblical preaching is practiced. Biblical preaching may be foolish as a style of communication, but God has commanded that we continue the practice of preaching the Word of God until He comes again.

Biblical Church discipline is implemented. By the way, our fathers in the faith, the reformers, believed that the true Church was characterized by the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, and the implementing of church discipline. Those were the marks of the true Church. They said, "Wherever you find those things, there you find the true Church."

Biblically qualified leaders are appointed. The biblical celebration of the Lord's table is demonstrated. Baptism is performed. Singing is heard. Prayers are offered. Why? Because it is commanded. We only sing because the apostles told us that we should sing and in doing so we would be teaching one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Why do we pray? We pray because the Bible tells us to pray.

Why do we do evangelism? Why do we send people to regions who have never heard the gospel? Because the Bible tells us to do so.

Thus we advocate orthodox churches that are faithful to biblical theology. The emphasis is upon the Word of God. This is one of the gigantic focal points of all the things that we emphasize when we do our conferences on this subject. In fact, in Wake Forest for the last few years we have done an annual conference to train expository preachers. We believe that unless expository preaching is happening in the Church, the churches will not become biblical churches. We understand that everybody doesn't know how to preach expositionally in the church. Therefore, it is our desire to encourage anyone who will to come join us and spend a couple of days spending time on this very, very important subject.

One of the problems with the Church is that in the midst of all of her programs she has lost the trans generational thinking that is in the worldview of the Bible. The Church is suffering greatly because of this collapse in the family.

But the collapse of the multigenerational vision in the church is just a symptom of a far larger problem. It is a symptom of removing the Bible from the center of the Church and replacing it with pragmatic, shortsighted methods. That in itself is a symptom of the rejection of God. It is the result of losing a sense of the gospel and losing the preaching of the whole counsel of God. The breakdown of the family is just a symptom of this great, great problem.

While family breakdown is a critical problem, the family is not the purpose of the Church. The glory of God is the purpose of the Church. The family is only a means to the glory of God. We don't start with the family. We start with God. We give our energy to God and then we look at what He has commanded us to do and then we, with faithful hearts, desire to accomplish it.

Here we would just say that a family integrated church should not have its center in the family. In fact, if you came to our church you would find that we preach the Word of God and it just happens to be that families are engaged in it all together. We don't preach about the family all the time, although we do recognize that our families need help and instruction for how to operate because most have not grown up understanding what the Bible has said about family life. So there are times that it is very appropriate for us to preach on the family, but this is not the central focus of the Church.

Second Characteristic: Family Integrated

The second characteristic of a family integrated Church is that families worship together. I am sure that is obvious. We need to recognize that there is no indication from Scripture that children were removed from the meetings designed for preaching, reading Scripture, prayer and worship. In our culture the removal of children from worship is almost comprehensive.

There are times when it is important for us to get historical perspective so that we can see our times a little bit more clearly. Historical patterns are often different than modern patterns. The critics of the family integrated church movement often forget that what we advocate was practiced by most of our treasured pastors and theologians of the past. When Luther and Calvin preached, there were no nurseries. When Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather preached, when George Whitefield preached in the great open theaters, the children were there. Look at the paintings of those gatherings. The children are there.

It is common knowledge that the Puritans experienced a great reformation of family life in their era because they were gathering their children together with them in worship. Some of the most important church leaders of the last 400 years practiced family integrated worship and those ministers enjoyed lifelong ministries preaching the gospel in their congregations. Week after week they found great joy preaching the Word of God to the littlest child, looking the babe and the great grandfather in the eyes as they sit in the meeting of the church together.

I would like to tell you about some of my favorite family integrated church pastors. Let's talk about Richard Baxter. What a joy it must have been for these men to preach to their dear families as they sat in the pews of their churches. Baxter said, "All our teaching must be as plain and simple as possible... If you speak to them as plainly as words can express them, as the easiest rules in grammar, the most plainly taught, will not be understood by a child that is but learning his alphabet."

In other words, even though Baxter was using words that were beyond the ability of young children to understand everything, he was still very conscious that he was preaching to children who were just barely learning their alphabet. He gloried in the fact that he was preaching to these dear children.

How about John Bunyan? He said, "You should labor to draw them out to God's public worship if, perhaps, God may convert their souls." It must have been very encouraging for Bunyan to explain the gospel to whole families in his church while anticipating the growth that would come as a result.

John Bunyan did not like the idea of children staying home. He wanted them in the meeting of the Church, to hear the preaching of the Word of God that they might be saved from their sins.

We could talk about Matthew Henry. Matthew Henry, the great Bible expositor, grew up listening to his own father's sermons and his sermons in his home. He said, "Little children should learn betimes to worship God. Their parents should instruct them in His worship and bring them to it, put them upon engaging in it as well as they can. And God will graciously accept them and teach them to do better." Think of all the children who sat under the ministry of this wonderful Bible expositor.

Or, how about Jonathan Edwards who was, perhaps, one of the greatest intellects in the history of Christianity? In Northampton, where Edwards was pastor for 23 years, the children were always present to hear his sermons.

Edwards' biographer, Ian Murray, says, "No one in those days doubted whether children should be attenders throughout public worship."

And there, as Edwards was preaching during the Great Awakening, throngs would crush into the church and they would have to find ways to get everybody in. He would often have the children lined up on the stairways to get as many children in as he possibly could.

He says, "I have seen the happy effects of dealing plainly and thoroughly with children in the concerns of their souls."

And so what I would like to submit that what we are advocating here it is nothing new and it is nothing really odd to those great brothers of ours from another era.

Jeremy Walker has summed it up this way. "The constant presumption of Scripture is that children were present in the worship of God's people."

We will be speaking in detail about this tomorrow as I will spend an entire session speaking of the biblical case for age integrated discipleship in the Church. We are going to run from the beginning to the end of Scripture to make that case.

But it is obvious that the normative practice in Israel and in the early Church was to integrate children into the normal practices and the gatherings of God's people. Nowhere do we find teaching or example that mirrors our modern age segregated approach to ministry. I am so grateful that it was the Lord Jesus who said, "Let the little children come unto me."

So what is a family integrated church? It is a place where families worship together.

Let me give you another quote from the National Center for Family Integrated Churches Confession. "The family is a building block. We affirm that biblical family is a scripturally ordered household of parents, children and sometimes others such as singles, widows, divorcees and grandparents forming the God ordained building blocks of the Church. We deny the Church's implementation of modern individualism by fragmenting the family through age graded, peer oriented and special interest classes, thus preventing rather than promoting family unity and inter generational relationships."

And so we would say, "Hold fast to the pattern of sound words," because this pattern of age integration is something that we find all over the Bible.

Third Characteristic: Singles Incorporated into Church Life

The third characteristic of a family integrated church that we advocate is that singles are incorporated into the full spectrum of Church life. In modern churches, singles are isolated into their own age categories generally.

It was interesting, I was having lunch with a singles' pastor recently and he was expressing his concerns to me. He had become discouraged about the results of his ministry. And he said that he was disheartened because he began to believe that when you put singles together, their maturity is stifled. He said, "These people's maturity is being stifled by the group that I have them in."

He was a vocational singles' pastor and he said that they get more and more selfish and they get more and more absorbed in their own needs. He asked, "Wouldn't it be ok to incorporate them into the larger fellowship of the Church?"

And, of course, you know, my answer to that would be obvious, that singles have a marvelous opportunity to minister in the Church. They do not have the added burdens of a family that the apostle Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 7.

"He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord, but he who is married cares about the things of the world, how he may please his wife."

This is not an argument against marriage. It is just an acknowledgement that there are certain freedoms that a single person has. When there is a single person in the Church, they can be a blessing in an unusual way to all the members of the household of faith. So singles are to be incorporated into the full spectrum of life in the Church.

It is critical that singles understand that they have an enormous opportunity in their hands to bring glory to God through the time that they have. They can be more mobile. They can live on less. There are so many advantages.

Of course, the apostle Paul himself was single. And we can't forget that the Lord Jesus Christ was single. There were many famous singles in the Bible who were incredibly inspiring to us.

Fourth Characteristic: Fathers Are Equipped to be Spiritual Leaders of Their Homes

Next, fathers are equipped to be spiritual leaders of their homes. This acknowledges the fact that God has placed fathers as heads of their households and He calls them to be the pastors, theologians and trainers of those in his household. The father is commanded by God to take the commandments of God into his heart and to teach them diligently to his children, to talk of them when he sits in the house, when he walks by the way, when he lies down and when he rises up.

In a family integrated Church there should be encouragement for fathers to play this critical role in the life of their children in their households. They should be taught to love the Word of God and to love their children, so that every single day the children would be instructed in the Word of God, prayers would be lifted up, and songs would be sung to the Lord. In this way God would also be the center of their little households, their little church.

The Puritans said that every house is as a little church and there is a head of that church that dispenses the knowledge of God in that little church called a household.

Well, what has happened to us in our culture? I think it is pretty obvious to most people that a meltdown has occurred in the Church and there has been a meltdown of masculinity among the men in our culture. Robert Lewis calls it, "A masculine melt down of historic proportions." A great part of manhood is to fill one's mind with the Word of God and then to deliver it daily in the household.

The Scriptures are perfectly clear that children should be trained in spiritual matters by their fathers and their father is the frontline delivery system for the things of the kingdom of God. And when you bypass that father you have rejected the biblical order for Church and home.

But in our churches today it is more common to bypass that father. We put him on the shelf. We push him aside and we do the job for him.

In a family integrated church we advocate that the father's role should be promoted. For example, if a church has so many programs that fathers don't have time to minister to their families, the church should cut down the number of programs that they have. Programs that take

over and bypass the father's role in the discipling his children have become the norm in the church. They are stealing from the father's discipleship responsibility.

Look at where the bulk of human resource energy is directed in the average church. Tremendous energy is exerted towards programs, the machinery of the Church, but very little energy is directed to the equipping of fathers. And so our message is that there needs to be an energy shift in the Church toward the discipleship of fathers. Also, fathers should remove whatever obstacles are in the way of their responsibility to deliver the message of the kingdom to their families when they sit in their house, when they walk by the way, when they lie down and when they rise up. This is a command of Scripture that must be recovered in the churches.

We have allowed disobedience to this command of Scripture to such an extent that that we have usurped the father's role with youth groups and children's churches and things like that. As a result the fathers in our churches today feel like they are bringing up their children in the training and the admonition of the Lord when they simply drop them off in a Sunday school class with a teacher he admires while he completely neglects to the harm of his family and the next generation his God given responsibility.

Fifth Characteristic: Biblical Roles and Jurisdiction are in Order

Number five, biblical roles and jurisdictions are in order. God has established three parallel jurisdictions that function in society. There is, first of all, the civil government which is established by God to punish evil doers and to wield the sword. Romans 13 gives the detail on that.

The second jurisdiction is the church which is ruled by elders. The church has been charged to preach the Word of God, to spread the gospel, to administer the Lord's Supper, to baptize, to administer Church discipline, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry and to bring the whole family together for worship and celebration.

The third jurisdiction established by God is the family which is formed by marriage. It provides headship and care for children and the training of the next generation. The husband is the head of the wife and children and he is responsible for their care, protection, and spiritual well being.

Well, what we have in the modern Church is a usurpation of jurisdictions. The church does what the family should do. The state does what the Church and family should do. This is a violation of the clear jurisdictional lines that are drawn in Scripture.

So in a family integrated church you should find a consciousness of the various jurisdictions and the roles and the responsibilities that exist in those jurisdictions. There is honor for all of them at the same time because they are parallel.

Now I believe that modern youth ministries subvert God's pattern for spiritual training of children because they assume the role which God has given to fathers. God specifically gave the task of being the primary spiritual instructor of children to fathers. When those fathers bring their

children in the meeting of the church they sit under the teaching of qualified elders and they are benefited by others in the Church who have gifts.

Now, I just want to make a critical comment here. Some people have said that what we advocate is based on a wrong ecclesiological foundation. To prove that statement they quote a statement in our confession that the Church is a spiritual family of families and singles. That is what we say: “We affirm that our heavenly Father designed his Church to be a spiritual household, a family of families and singles where members know one another intimately and shepherds understand the sheep effectively and various body parts function interactively. We deny, we reject the current trend to value numbers and size more than intimacy and vitality by building impersonal mega churches rather than the multiplication of family like congregations.”

What happens is that people will use this statement slanderously against us and they say, “These people believe that the Church is a family of families. That is the only thing they believe about the Church.”

That statement was never intended to become the irreducible statement that defines our understanding of the Church. It is just one little slice. We were simply saying that when a family walks into a church it is more than individuals that are walking into that church. There is a father walking into that church who has a separate jurisdiction. There is a mother and a wife. There are children. And all of them have responsibilities. It is the responsibility of church leaders to recognize and bless those biblical jurisdictions and roles. They are not to destroy and obliterate them in the meetings of the Church by just treating everyone as a separate individual and sending them all different ways.

So we are not saying that the irreducible principle of the Church is that it is a family of families. We are saying that when a family walks into the meeting of the Church, they walk in as a family and they are walking into their eternal family, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, there are in that church two separate, yet complementary, jurisdictions that are integrally important to one another.

Thus we say that a family integrated church should recognize biblical roles and jurisdictions and we promote them so that the church understands who they are and what their responsibilities are in a given environment.

Sixth Characteristic: Children Incorporated in the Life of the Church

Number six, we say that children are not isolated but incorporated as participants in the life of the church.

We don't see any evidence in Scripture that children form a separate society or that we should put them into a tank of people just like them. We believe that adolescence should be regarded as a myth. 100 years ago, adolescence barely existed. Before then children worked beside their parents and assumed adult responsibilities very, very early in life. Now we are told to believe that youth can't do anything important or sophisticated. We think that is totally against the testimony of Scripture.

In Scripture, there is an acknowledgment of ages. But generally what you find is that there are two age categories. There is the older and the younger. I am not sure which one I am part of. My father who is 84 years old he thinks I am younger. I look at my son and my daughter and I think I am older. Well, I don't know, but there was an older and the younger in the Bible. This age segregated world that we have created is a modern invention and it fights against the patterns of discipleship and relationship that we find in the Bible.

Consider that Uzziah was 16 when he became king. David, before he became king, was an accomplished musician and was killing wild animals like lions and bears. These were people of responsibility and strength. They rose up and did things early in life. This is what we promote.

Children are not isolated, but rather incorporated as participants among the people of God.

Seventh Characteristic: Biblical Youth Ministry

Number 7, biblical youth ministry is implemented. We know what modern youth ministry is, but what is biblical youth ministry?

Where does the idea of the youth group come from? The Bible is the most important information we have regarding the ministry of our churches. Can you find it anywhere in this Bible? Search the Scriptures. Find the concept of the youth group. Find the principle of the youth group. Find a command for this practice that we spend so much money on.

Well, you can't find it. That is the problem.

The closest resemblance to a youth group in the Bible that I am aware of is recorded in 2 Kings Chapter two. In this passage, there was a group of youth who were making fun of the prophet Elisha and bears came out of the woods devoured 42 of the youths in that youth group. That is the one place you can go to demonstrate a group of youth gathering together and it gives a brilliant illustration of the impact of concentrated foolishness.

The modern concept of youth groups as good and desirable is absent from all biblical, ecclesiastical language. We must acknowledge this one thing, that, however much we like or are benefited by our youth group, this idea does not come from the teaching of the apostles, the prophets, or the Lord Jesus Christ.

We could talk about the results of youth groups. We could talk about the results of six year olds learning culture from six year olds and 13 year olds learning culture from 13 year olds. However, I think the results of this are legendary and we don't really need to go over the disastrous situation that the Church is in today.

The Church is absolutely losing the next generation. All the researchers say somewhere between 70 and 90% of the children in our most conservative youth groups will never return to church after their freshman year in college.

This is simply a statistical reality. These are just broad trends and features of modern Church life.

A friend of mine went to his friend who had several children and he said, “You do know that three of your children you will lose in that church if normal life happens.”

And that is just a reality. Imagine that. You almost face a guarantee of this in modern churches. Somebody needs to stand up and yell, “Fire!” Somebody needs to say, “Hey, wait. What is wrong with this picture?”

Over against this modern version of youth ministry is a biblical youth ministry conducted by fathers in their households and through the preaching and teaching of qualified elders and the participation in the relational life in a local church. That is how biblical youth ministry should be conducted.

Paul made clear to Timothy that there was a way that he ought to act in the church of God. I believe he would have us understand it as well.

Eighth Characteristic: Wives are Functioning According to Their Biblical Complementarian Roles

Number eight, wives are functioning according to their biblical complementarian roles as helpers to their husbands and nurturers of children in the home.

God has established and illustrated gender oriented roles and he has commanded particular functions to be carried out by the various genders. The apostle said, “I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of woman is man. And the head of Christ is God.”

There is an order of authority that is critical. The head of Christ is God and the head of man is Christ and the head of woman is man. That is the order. And if you get any of those out of order you have big trouble. Imagine man becoming the head of Christ. What would that be called? That would be called apostasy. That would be called the Lucifarian rebellion.

It is not appropriate for man to be head of Christ or the head of God. In the same way, it is not proper for woman to be head of man. There is an order of authority that God has established in all of life. There are many commands in Scripture that outline the particular roles and responsibilities of fathers and mothers and there should be a promotion of these roles in the Church.

I just completed a short book called *Feminine by Design* which deals with this subject. It gives 12 pillars of biblical femininity through the things that I desired to teach my daughters when they were growing up so that they would know what it means to be a woman.

What does it mean to be a woman? Well, you are not a man. You are a help meet. You are a keeper at home. These things define biblical femininity. Unless you know those, love them, and

continue with them, you will have messed up gender roles in your church. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to teach the various gender roles.

All of our little daughters and all of our men need to know what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man because you are not going to get that in the media anymore. The Bible is very, very clear about it and my belief is that every boy and every girl should be memorizing those texts of Scripture so that they are not washed off of their moorings in this wicked and perverse generation that we live in today.

One of the things I am so grateful for is to have daughters. My daughter Claudia is in motherhood training. Civilization is hanging in the balance for what my daughter Claudia will do.

Claudia, I trust, will save civilization one child at a time. Since she was really little, she has wanted to have 16 children like Sarah Edwards, the wife of the Great Awakening preacher Jonathan Edwards, had.

Well, if she does this and all of her children do this for five generations, my little daughter Claudia will have a million children on the ground. If she does it for eight generations, it is four billion children. If it is 10 generations, it is one trillion.

Of course, that will never happen, right, because it assumes that all of her children are going to have 16 children that will have 16 children who will have 16 children.

But I will tell you this, a daughter needs to understand that God has given her an amazing role in this world to carry and give birth to the next generation that will go on. And she needs to know that this role of biblical femininity is so critical that she should let nothing get in the way of that role. She should let no one, no friend, no church, no government, get in the way of the role that God has given to her.

Because of the atmosphere of feminism that pervades our world today, this is a really, really critical issue. Nobody grows up just understanding what biblical femininity or masculinity is. We have to teach these things in our churches. It is critical that we do it.

And I really do believe that in many ways civilization hangs in the balance of what mothers do with their time and whether they will pour all of their heart into the next generation.

We get a lot of criticism for this position, but I will say I would rather face the criticism of men while on earth and have the praise of God in the day when I stand before the throne of God at the end of my life. When He says, "Where are the men who said that women should be keepers at home, that they should be helpers of their husbands, and that they should act and dress and live like women and not men?" I want to be able to say that I was one of those men.

We promote wives functioning according to their biblical complementarian roles as helpers to their husbands and nurturers of the children in the home. This is something that needs to be

encouraged and promoted. There is much fear in the hearts of men and women to engage this, to fearlessly embrace what God has said about womanhood.

Ninth Characteristic: Biblical Offices and Biblical Requirements for Church leaders are applied

Number 9, we say that in a family integrated church, biblical offices and biblical requirements for church leaders are to be applied.

There are two church offices prescribed in Scripture. They are the office of elder and the office of deacon. These are to be qualified in particular ways.

There is no biblical basis for the office of the senior pastor, recreation pastor, youth pastor, or children's minister in the Bible. It is a great problem that we have invented many unbiblical offices in the church. This is one of the features of the Roman Catholic Church. They have invented dozens and dozens of offices that were never prescribed by God. There are bishops and archbishops and archdeacons and canons regular and canons every other kind you can imagine. One new church function after another. But God has said there are two. There are not 3 or 10 or 20.

We believe that those who hold these offices are to be properly qualified. Many church leaders today are disqualified because they are not managing their households well.

In a state of the collapse of the family as we have today one of the problems is that it puts a big hurt on church leaders and what we know today is that there are many, many church leaders who do not manage their households well. Because of this they are disqualified by the Word of God to be leading these congregations.

Tenth Characteristic: In General, the Principle of Family Integration is Applied to Programs for Equipping and Evangelism

Number ten, family integration as a principle guides programs for equipping and evangelism. This means that, in general, families are walking together in discipleship, evangelism, and missions; they are not segregated.

There is a beautiful picture of this in Acts chapter 21 where the apostle Paul is leaving on a ship. All the families come and pray with the apostle there on the beach. Specifically mentioned are the children who are there at that time of prayer. That was the way that life in the Church was engaged. We believe that generally the functions and the programs of the Church should be age and family integrated.

Now there are people who say that they believe that the family never can be separated. That is absolutely ridiculous. We don't believe that. We don't practice that in our own church. There are times when it is appropriate for the whole family not to be there. We are not saying that the family always has to be together in every single thing that happens in the Church. That is not the message. What is the message, though, is that age integration is a principle that you see across

Scripture. We will delve into this in depth tomorrow. But this principle is clear all over the Bible. Therefore we promote it.

How can the older women instruct the young women if they are off in their age segregated classes? How can the elderly help the younger ones if they are off in their senior citizen class? How can they fulfill the command of God for the older to teach the younger?

Church life should be age integrated and the principle of family integration should be promoted in a biblical church.

Eleventh Characteristic: The Household and Hospitality are the Centerpiece of Community Ministry

Number 11, the household and hospitality are the centerpiece of community ministry. There are many hospitality commands in Scripture. One of the most fascinating studies you can engage in is the study of the use of the term household in the book of Acts. It is amazing what ministry happened in a household. Flip back to the gospels or farther and you will find the same thing. The Passover itself was celebrated in the household to save the family from destruction.

Today, there is a loss of an understanding of the household and its prominence in the work of the kingdom of God in the earth. A biblical church should promote a biblical view of the household and not leave the people thinking that ministry only happens in the four walls of a building.

In established churches, that mentality really does run through most of the people that are there. They think that if you are a faithful Christian the ministry is going to happen in the building, but it doesn't happen in your home. We need to see our homes differently.

Twelfth Characteristic: Ministry is Primarily Relational

Number 12, the ministry is not primarily programmatic, but relational. In the New Testament, we find the rich relational texture of the Church to be defined in a lot of ways. We find one way in the more than fifty one another's that we find in the New Testament. These, when obeyed and applied, provide for a blessed Church life. The grace and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ are spread in the Church relationally. The Church is not designed to be one program after another where people sit like cabbages listening to a talking head. The ministry of the Church is very personal and it is very relational. Therefore, we would advocate that biblical churches should be very careful to not over program their people lest they rob them of their relational life.

Thirteenth Characteristic: The Fatherless are Brought into the Mainstream of Church and Family Life

Number 13, the fatherless are brought into the mainstream of church and family life.

What do you do with youth without families? What do you do with that ocean of lost young men and women who do not have godly families? The New Testament pattern explains what we should do. We find ministry to the fatherless explained in a number of places in Scripture.

We need more men who think like Job thought. In Job 29 he says, “I delivered the poor and the fatherless. I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I was a father to the poor. I plucked the victims from its teeth.”

The New Testament has a road map for the care of the fatherless and the widow. The proper care of them is called pure and undefiled religion. That means that the families of the Church should be bringing these people into their homes and feeding them, taking them on outings, and taking them to Church. Bring them into an eternal family, a family so far better than any family they will ever see, the family of God.

Families should incorporate the lost children of this world into their family life. Who is your neighbor? That is the question that we need to be asking.

What do you do with those lost youth? Well, you don’t take them to a rock and roll concert. You bring them into your family and you expose them to family worship. You read the Bible to them. You have them over for meals and you take them to the blessed meetings of the Church so that they will know that there is a God who has created a wonderful family for them for all eternity.

Fourteenth Characteristic: Multigenerational Faithfulness is Promoted

Finally, number 14, multi generational faithfulness is promoted. There is a multi generational mentality that runs throughout Scripture. You, your son and your grandson all the days of your life. You find that kind of language all throughout Scripture.

There is a way that ought to conduct yourself in the household of God and it does include a consciousness of the importance of age or of multi generational faithfulness. Families need to understand that they have a purpose in this world that goes beyond their own life span, that they must pour their energy into the next generation so that the gospel will be preached in all the neighborhoods that their children might live in, that there is a demonstration of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so multi generational faithfulness must be promoted.

Statement 4

Now the investment that we are making has returns. I want to tell you that I personally am extremely hopeful for the returns that I am seeing from an age integrated ministry. My heart is full of encouragement because I am seeing dozens and dozens of wonderful effects of age integrated ministry.

I want to talk about the product of the architecture of the Church, this one little piece of the architecture of the great building of God, this age integrated discipleship methodology that we see.

I want to give you an illustration to explain this.

A couple of years ago my daughter was married and I had the amazing privilege of walking her down the aisle. I dreamed about this moment for a long time. Just a few weeks before the wedding, though, she bought me her vows and said, "Papa, I want you to look over these vows and tell me what you think."

I read those vows. I will never forget the moment I was in our kitchen and I was just overcome with emotion because all of her vows were extracted from the various phrases and words of Scripture. She wanted her vows to read like a running stream of Scripture, not varying from it at all. She desired that her life with her husband would be a reflection of what God had said in Scripture.

When you are writing your vows, there are two places you can get them. You can just go make them up or you can go get them from somewhere. And my daughter went to Scripture. Her husband Peter did the same thing. I had the privilege of sitting down with him and his father going over these vows. It was one of the most blessed experiences of my life.

And so she was married and it was just a very, very happy, happy occasion. But one of the things that was so encouraging to me was that one of the dear daughters of Zion, who had been raised in an age integrated ministry having an understanding of multi generational faithfulness and the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, was there with her vows coming directly out of Scripture.

Here is what I am saying. There is a rising generation of sons and daughters that desire to build their lives out of this holy, sufficient, perfect book and they desire to engage their lives in that way.

Here is Peter's vow. "I, Peter David Bradrick, covenant before God and man to you, Kelly Jeannette, to be your loving husband, to lead you, to protect you and to provide for you in the fear of the Lord. I vow to love you as my wife even as Christ loved the Church, to lay down my life for you, to wash you with the water of the Word, to love you as my own body and to nourish and cherish you even as the Lord does the Church, to render unto you the affection due you knowing that I do not have authority over my own body, but you do, to dwell with you according to knowledge giving honor unto you as unto the weaker vessel and living together with you as heirs together of the grace of life. You alone will be my delight and the wife of my youth. I will fight for you, for our sons, for our daughters and for our household. The Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts you and me. I will be yours in times of plenty and in times of want, in times of sickness, in times of health, in times of joy, in times of sorrow, in times of failure and times of triumph. I pledge to you my life as a loyal and faithful husband."

What I love about these vows is that they had the imprint, they had the pattern of sound doctrine that they had learned day after day in their houses.

There is a complementary pattern for family and Church life. There is a design and God is the great designer of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the architecture of this great family of

God, families are brought together not to exalt the family, but to use the family for the glory of God and to communicate the gospel from one generation to the next.

Once again, family integration is only one element in the architecture of biblical church life, but if you lose that one element, you lose much.

Some of you are suffering even now. Some of you are losing your children to the youth culture in your churches and the wrong, unbiblical, worldly discipleship methods that have become part of the architecture. We must examine the architecture and look to that great Designer and say to Him, "Oh, Lord, we are ready for the imprint of the pattern of sound words."

Would you pray with me?

Lord, I give thanks to you for the Church which has nursed me and corrected me and comforted me all of the days since I first was converted so many years ago. I praise you for your Church and I pray that you would help each one of us to treat this bride, this body, this family ever so well until you take us home. In Jesus' name, Amen.