

**Study of Key Challenges Faced by Parents among CSI Churches in Bangalore in
Passing on Their Faith to Their Children**

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Abstract

This thesis analysed the key challenges in passing on faith by parents to children with a special focus on the role played by their church. This research was motivated by faith background and real life experiences, and driven by the need to understand how parents are instilling faith and passing on biblical values to their children, their influences and the challenges they face in this role. It was observed that the faith and commitment of children varied as they entered adolescence and this study was to analyse the factors affecting this faith transmission from parents to children.

Ninety-two parents from three churches (most of them are active members of their churches) of the Church of South India, Karnataka Central Diocese in Bangalore participated in the survey. Most parents who were surveyed admitted that children are seen to be influenced by secular friends, media and electronic gadgets. Parents are unable to spend time with children owing to challenges from work and other social commitments.

The study concluded that parents need to be intentional in their role even as children move through various phases in their life such as from when they are adolescents to teenagers and then as youth. This study helped in visualising the multi-dimensional challenges - psychological, social and spiritual, and encourages the parents to be constantly available for their next generation.

Keywords

adolescence, role of parents, passing on faith, role of church, challenges in parenting.

This research aimed at knowing why many children from church going families are not able to live out their faith. In the context of spiritual education being outsourced to church and each parent choosing the role that's convenient for them, as a result of which the next generation was getting affected.

The research was done in the backdrop of the struggles seen among families in churches, even in dedicated Christian homes, and the parents' drop in involvement on faith matters as children move to adolescent age. The research was conducted among the parents of churches belonging to the Church of South India denomination located in Bangalore, a cosmopolitan city in South India. The Church of South India is a conglomerate of churches brought under united Episcopal leadership.

This research used the quantitative method of study to find the influences that affect the parents of adolescent children. The participants for this research are parents of adolescent children from the three target CSI churches in Bangalore, India. The churches chosen for exploring this study are St. Mark's Cathedral, East Parade Malayalam Congregation and St. Andrew's Church.

Literature Reviewed

This study drew inspiration from a passage from the Bible located in Deuteronomy 6:6-10 which centred around the covenant that God made with Abraham to teach the next generations to keep the way of the Lord and therefore formed the basis of parenting. The family is therefore a prototype in which God's love is revealed uniquely and a mechanism by which God's love can be displayed. Many books on parenting, adolescence and role of church in parenting in the context of an urban city were consulted and this study was done on the basis that the family plays a vital and active role in the construction, interpretation and transmission of social behaviour, moral values and spiritual beliefs. The goal of parenting is not only to transmit knowledge of God, but also to pass on the commitment to His values.

Christian parents' discipline and lead the children in Christian ways but at the age of adolescence the children get influenced by many factors around them. Parents need to lovingly continue caring and building that crucial heart connection with their children and to speak above the voices of other influences in their life. The impression period which provides a window of opportunity between ages 7 and 15 to capture the hearts of children are not fully utilized by parents. This research looked at the spiritual, psychological and social challenges that parents face to guide their children. The thesis emphasises the fact that parents need to continue loving, caring and building that crucial heart connection with their children even as they are growing up. The role of father in a home was highlighted using the Word needs a Father by Cassie Carstens.

Research also covered home centred church supported models as empathised in the Family Friendly church by Freudenburg, Ben F., and Rick Lawrence. and it could help parents to instill in their children a deeper commitment to God and His word. The scope and role of church was explored using Rob Rienow's book "Limited Church: Unlimited Kingdom". These books helped develop a foundational role of parents and their relationship with their adolescent children.

Methodology

The quantitative method of research was used to collect information from parents. The results were analysed to derive conclusions about how the church as the body of Christ can step in and equip parents.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

Research Question #1

What are the challenges faced by the parents in teaching biblical values to their children?

The purpose of this question is to explore the challenges faced by parents when it comes to the spiritual nourishment of their children in adolescence. Even though parents

always want what is best for their children, they face many hurdles/hindrances when it comes to the implementation of these steps. The study hopes to find out whether it is lack of knowledge or a lack of willingness or some external challenge. The survey explored the psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of the challenges faced by the parents. This being a quantitative methodology, the survey included the different challenges parents might have in their urban environment to consistently teach biblical values to children.

Research Question #2

How is the church helping parents to model biblical values to children?

The responses to this question helped to understand the main influences on parents when it came to teaching biblical values to their children. The role of the church in influencing the spiritual framework of the family and influencing the passing on of the faith to children was evaluated here.

Research Question #3

What are the other influences that help parents model biblical values to their children?

This question explored the influences in the life of parents to be of influence in the children. There are a lot of resources available as support groups and tools that will develop and influence the parenting styles and values they impart to children.

Methodology

The participants for this quantitative research are parents of adolescent children from the target three CSI churches of Bangalore. The churches chosen for exploring this study are St. Mark's Cathedral, East Parade Malayalam Church and St. Andrew's Church. The families surveyed are members of these churches and practicing Christians which means that they have been in this church for the past six months at least and are exposed to the programs and events held at church. The questions included the influence of the church and others factors that aid in passing on faith for families. The quantitative method of research was used to collect information from parents. The results were analysed to derive conclusions about how

the church as the body of Christ can step in and equip parents. Surveys using questionnaires are easier to administer using Google Forms. The spreadsheet analysed the results to measure and obtain the data needed for the research. A percentage measurement for each of the questions gave a clear picture of the influence of parents and the challenges they faced in passing on faith to their children especially in a cosmopolitan city like Bangalore. The cost of the research was minimal since it was done on the WhatsApp digital media and via email, which are the most prevalent modes of communication nowadays.

Findings

The key findings from the research have been listed below according to the three research questions posed to the respondents.

Research Question 1

What are the challenges faced by the parents in teaching biblical values to their children?

1. Secularization of society has destroyed the spiritual foundation of families. In the survey conducted, 50% of the parents surveyed feel that their secular culture has caused confusion in the minds of children about God. 54% of the parents feel that their children are influenced by their secular friends as they grow older. 46% of parents feel that with the many religions in India, exposure to a variety of religions and ideologies would help children make the right decisions.

2. Focusing on individual freedom has challenged the parenting journey. Many parents extend the idea of freedom by letting their children choose even foundational beliefs. 60% of the parents feel that they do not want to appear to be spiritualizing everything.

3. Work and academic pressures have taken precedence over the spiritual nourishment of children. Owing to intense work schedule and church commitments, 34% of the parents surveyed found it difficult to spend time with their children to encourage them to follow Jesus. 35% of the survey respondents felt that school and extra-curricular schedule pressures of their children prevented them from finding the time to have deep spiritual

conversations. 76% of the participants felt the need for fathers to spend more time with their children on matters of spirituality and Christian discipleship.

4. Unity in decision-making between family members with regard to spiritual matters is a challenge in teaching biblical values to children. 95% of the parents who responded said that there should be more agreement between husband and wife in matters related to parenting and the spiritual development of children. However, an overwhelming 92% of parents claimed to have a spiritual vision statement for their family that they use to convey to their children. The lack of a unified spiritual vision for the family among husband and wife was a cause for concern. This exposes their life as separate individuals with varied goals instead of envisioning their life together as a team. 76% of the participants felt that stronger positive relationships between children and their fathers would help in the spiritual formation of the children.

5. Parents feeling they have done enough in passing on Christian values to their children. 96% of the parents feel that they have passed on the Christian values they have received from their parents to their children. 77% of the parents felt their family prayer had become routine and wished for more meaningful teaching during that time. This highlights areas to work as they continue to raise the next generation and reignite in them a passion to know and love God.

Research Question#2

How is the church helping parents to model biblical values to their children?

1. The Church is looked on with the expectation to provide the spiritual nourishment and guidance needed for parents. Among the families surveyed, 66% rely on their church to help them in their parenting journey. They are willing to accept and do what the church requires of them. The focus is on the church to understand the impact and play a significant role in building these families.

2. The Church is providing a good Sunday School and family-related topics that the parents are happy with. Parents are content and feel that the church is taking care of

their spiritual needs as they lead the family. 81% observe that family-related topics are emphasized in the church programs and activities. 83% of the parents say that their church has taught them to express faith and testify to others.

3. Format of worship at church and at home needs to be re-evaluated to accommodate the next generation. 63% of the parents surveyed think that their children are too bored to sit through a two-hour service on a Sunday. 77% of the respondents feel that their family prayers are sometimes just a part of their routine and wish that they had more meaningful teaching at that time.

Research Question #3

Apart from the role of the church, what are the other influences that help parents model biblical values to their children?

1. Parents feel that their personal walk with God influenced their commitment to teaching biblical values to their children. 100% of the parents mentioned that their personal walk with Christ has helped them to intentionally teach biblical values to their children. There is a clear emphasis on a personal relationship with God and affirms the fact that they themselves cannot lead their children where they themselves haven't shown that commitment towards a personal walk with God.

2. Strong family ties and godly mentors help parents guide their children with godly values. A significantly high proportion of parents surveyed (91%) confirmed that the grandparents of their children have a great influence over their spiritual life. Godly friends and other family members (again a high percentage of 91%) play a crucial role in leading the children spiritually. The strong Indian family traditions and culture unite people and form relationships that form the basis for spiritual interactions. The older generation is also more aware and conscious of the importance of godly values for the next generation.

Recommendation

This research recommends parents to be intentional with children even during their adolescent years to stay close to their children. Developing a heart connection with the child

leads to an improved family connection and children would be more willing to accept the faith of the parents. The increased role of father in the child's life would also help strengthen the faith of children. From a church's perspective, a home centred church-supported model should be encouraged to empower parents and to journey with parents to encourage them. As churches, a team that's focused on family ministry with a charter to train parents with family altar, family related camps, seminars and creation of small groups to empower parents in their roles will be a good step in the direction of a home centred church supported model. This will in turn enrich families and help in building the church.

Further study could be conducted in other churches to check if an uniform pattern develops. Studies could also be conducted to see the impact of the kind of worship, the urban/rural contrast and how the church can indeed empower parents through different life stages and to stay as a community to bring their children up.

Conclusion

The study showed that urban parents face a lot of challenges as they balance responsibilities at work and at home. The church and the community need to intentionally walk along with the parents in building a strong next generation who will follow the faith of their parents. The struggles of the parents are real and common and they need to focus on the task at hand and persevere in their responsibility towards their children.

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