



## **The Greatest Untapped Evangelistic Opportunity Before the Modern Church**

*By Scott Brown*

I believe that we are involved in the greatest evangelistic opportunity before the church today. I am talking about the salvation of millions of children under the evangelistic and discipleship ministry of fathers and mothers in the home. This is not the only mission field, but it is perhaps the most neglected mission field before the church in our day.

The Bible calls fathers to preach the gospel to their children every day, when they “sit in their house, when they walk by the way, when they lie down and when they rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:7). This kind of instruction gives children a true understanding of the gospel.

### **Consider the Evangelistic Impact**

Think of the evangelistic impact this would have in our generation. It is a father’s calling in life to pass on the knowledge of God to the next generation. A father is commanded to expose his children day after day, to the greatness of God, the perfections of His ways, and the great stories that explain the character and nature of God. Daily, he praises God with hundreds of words and practical principles. Day after day, his children observe him as he personally delights in the Word. They watch him as he places himself under its wonderful teaching. They see how their daddy is comforted and confronted by it and is changed before their eyes. They see how good and mighty God is and how foolish it is to turn away from Him. They have seen, time after time, how their father might have been discouraged or confused, but the lamp of the Word made everything clear.

This kind of earthly father stands with his Father in Heaven and calls out, “Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion” (Hebrews 3:7-11).

He cries out, day after day, explaining the principles and stories that glorify the kindnesses of God, His wrath toward sinners, and His vanquishing power over all things.

Under this kind of loving and happy ministry, the children hear the whole counsel of God from Genesis to Revelation. They see the flow of history from God’s perspective. They hear of the great doctrines of the faith which have sustained humble people from one generation to the next. They observe the mighty hand of God working against all human odds. They see the beginning and the end of history and where they themselves stand in its stream. They know who wins the battle. They know that nothing can stand against the Lord.

How different this is, compared to sending them to an evangelistic crusade or a concert to see if they might be saved. Often a young person will go to a Christian concert and walk down the aisle or make a profession of faith, without really being saved. They might go forward because they had an emotional response or a guilty conscience or because a friend went down. But it was not because they really understood the gospel. This is why so few who “make decisions” at evangelistic meetings ever continue in a normal Christian life.

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One reason is that they never had the kind of background understanding of sin or repentance or the specifics of the life they were turning toward. They were like the seeds that fell on the shallow soil, which sprouted up and died away because they had no root in themselves.

This is why we have so many young people walking down aisles thinking they have been saved, when in fact they just took a walk. They really had no idea what they were doing, or what the call really was all about. We have many people in our churches who “walked an aisle,” “accepted Christ into their hearts,” but never really understood much about the context and content of the Gospel. For many, the Gospel has often been trivialized and reduced to “accepting Christ”.

A detailed understanding of the Gospel is exactly what a daily diet of a father’s Gospel-teaching gives. It gives both the context and content that is necessary to become a *true* follower of Christ.

Also, consider how different this is compared to sending them to Sunday school class and youth group once per week to see if they might be saved. If a father engages his children in gospel teaching six days a week for eighteen years, there will be 5,616 opportunities to speak of the goodness of God. If he sends his child to Sunday school for eighteen years, there will be 936 opportunities for him to hear of the goodness of God. If they go to Sunday school for a lifetime (to age 70) they will only have 3,640 opportunities. This means that God would have a father give his child more teaching by age eighteen, than he will get in the modern church in a lifetime.

But if these children had been under the daily evangelistic and discipleship ministry of their fathers, they would more likely understand why they had given their hearts to the Lord. They would have understood the love of God in all of its detail.

### **Rebellion against God’s Clear Commands to Fathers**

God has not commanded fathers to send their children to concerts and evangelistic crusades where they only get a small understanding of the gospel. He has commanded that they would be teaching their children and caring for their souls diligently day by day. The sad reality of fathers’ lives in modern churches is that they are satisfied with Sunday schools and concerts and evangelistic crusades (which are never mentioned or encouraged or commanded in Scripture), but they reject God’s undeniable commands to personally teach their children daily. This is outright rebellion against the Lord and against His clear commands. Unfortunately, the rebellion continues because they usually feel like they are faithful fathers — especially when compared to their Christian brothers and their pastor. Fathers often feel great about doing something that has no basis in scripture, while neglecting to do what is commanded.

### **Dumbed Down Fatherhood**

Fathers often feel great about it because they define exemplary fatherhood as going to the kids’ recitals and games and getting them into a good Sunday school or youth group.

In order to rescue this lost generation of children in Christian homes from hell, we must first help fathers understand what God has commanded. We must speak clearly of what God has commanded so that they do not miss this opportunity.

I am trusting God in prayer for a revival that reverses the current trends regarding the loss of our young people to the devil.

## **Wake Up! We ARE Losing the Next Generation**

Observations and data from many different sources is proclaiming the fact that we are losing the next generation.

Researcher George Barna believes that if current trends in the belief systems and practices of the younger generation continue, that in ten years, church attendance will be half the size it is today (*Revolution* by George Barna).

Dawson MacAlister, national youth ministry specialist, says that 90% of kids in active high school youth groups do not go to church by the time they are sophomores in college (*The Present Future* by Reggie McNeal, Jossey-Bass).

Data from the Southern Baptist Convention indicate that currently we are losing 70-88% of our youth after their freshman year in college (T.C. Pinkney, Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, Nashville, Tennessee, September 18, 2001). Pinkney reported that 70% of teenagers involved in church youth groups stop attending church within two years of their high school graduation. See also the 2002 Southern Baptist Council on Family. Pinkney reported the 70% figure, while the Southern Baptist Council on Family Life reported that 88% of the children in evangelical homes leave church at the age of 18.

Thom Rainer, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary launched a survey that he hoped would tell him if people understood the gospel. He surveyed asking the following question: "Do you know for certain that if you die today, what would you say to God if He asked you why He should let you into His heaven?"

The following percentages of people answered in a way that would indicate they were born again:

### **Those Who Understand the Gospel by Age Group**

Born before 1946	65%
Born between 1946 and 1964	35%
Born between 1965 and 1976	15%
Born between 1976 and 1994	4%

(Source: *The Present Future* by Reggie McNeal.)

A growing number of people are leaving the institutional church, either never making a confession of faith or giving up on it.

### **Consider the Enormous Leverage of Fathers for Evangelism**

The Baptist Press reported that if a child is the first person in the household to become a Christian, there is a 3.5 percent probability everyone in the household will follow. If the mother is first, there is a 17 percent chance everyone else in the household will follow. If the father is first, there is a 93% probability that everyone else in the house will follow.

### **Pray for an Uprising of Men**

I believe that a recovery of biblical fatherhood is the greatest and most neglected evangelistic opportunity in the church today. It is not the only legitimate evangelistic opportunity, but it is the most neglected. Imagine an uprising of men who preach the gospel daily to their children.

While the church in the twenty-first century is losing the next generation of children to worldliness, we are encouraging fathers to return to the biblical role of the head of the household to preach the gospel and to make disciples of all of the children in the household. We are also encouraging church leaders to have the

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courage to cancel the programs which steal the father's Creation-order role and to instead put their energy into fulfilling the clear commands of God for fathers.

We pray that these children who hear and believe the gospel will be living demonstrations of the Abrahamic covenant as they fan out all over the globe to spread the gospel of the kingdom, in order that... "your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you" (Genesis 28:14-15).

What kind of evangelistic effort will stem the tide? Look to the simple commands and practices that Scripture presents.

We must preach the gospel to everyone in our households and give them every detail by providing them a thousand reasons to believe.

Please pray that we fathers would not miss the greatest untapped evangelistic opportunity before the church today. Let it be said of this generation of fathers that they did their part to fulfill the Great Commission.

Psalm 22, that great Messianic prophesy, shows us the glory of salvation from one generation to the next. The suffering Messiah, who said, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" also sings praises for the salvation of "all the families of the nations," "a posterity who will serve Him," and who will declare it to those "who are yet to be born."

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive. A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, they will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this." (Psalm 22:27-31)

Scott Brown and wife Deborah, parents of one son and three daughters, homeschool their children in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Their oldest daughter is married and is expecting the Browns' first grandchild in Summer, 2007. Scott pastors Hope Baptist Church. He also serves as director of the National Center for Family -Integrated Churches.

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