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*"Keeping us informed and connected."*

A Note from The President Of LCMI

I am excited to share an article by my second son on the subject of "The Church as a Family." I pray that as you read this you will be blessed, encouraged, and challenged by what he has to say. At LCMI we say that we are "Framily" – friends and family. So, what does that mean and what should it look like as we move forward in the advancement of the Kingdom of God?



Aaron Dailey

## The Church as a Family



My wife and I had our first child the same year we planted our church. Over time, we watched as both matured together. Now our son is seventeen (which sure makes it easy to remember how old our church is), and just as God shaped our church as our child grew, God shaped me as a pastor as I grew as a father.

I don't think it's an accident that the theme of family accompanied our journey of starting a church so well. In fact, I believe that the primary identity of the people of

God is to be a family. Yet it seems that many of us have lost our identity as a church family and traded it for a far more corporate definition. Entrepreneurial language about figures and efficiency dominates modern church planting and pastoring—and it has shaped our churches' cultures as a result. Church leaders can also let this corporate attitude affect the way they view their role and job description. I have run several businesses in the past, but as my family grew, I realized something—I've learned more about being a pastor by caring for my family than by running a business.

Sadly, most people view the growth of a family and the growth of a church in entirely different lights. My wife and I now have five children, and we hear all kinds of banter from church leaders who marvel at how large our family is becoming. Rightfully, they see the responsibility of raising such a large family. But many people strive to have huge churches without addressing those same concerns.

As many parents do, I understand the costs and burden of raising children into healthy men and women. It truly does take a lot of money, time, energy, prayer, and trusting in God. It feels impossible and without the Holy Spirit's empowerment it truly is impossible.

But shouldn't this be the same burden pastors feel as we serve and lead our congregations?

Raising a church family is a big responsibility, too—one that takes a parental heart. I have felt a great joy and excitement as our church has grown, but also a deep burden for discipling, training, and sending our new members out into the world. I also know it is an impossible task without the Spirit. All in all, caring for the members of a church congregation is just like caring for our own flesh and blood—we are a family!

But how do we create a familial environment in our church? Here's a list of questions to consider in this regard:

- How does the community view our church—as a product to be consumed, or as a family?
- How do we want people in our communities to see themselves?
- How can creating a family atmosphere reinforce our identity in the gospel?
- How do these answers change the way we choose or disciple leaders?
- How does this change the way we think about caring for the least, lost, and hurting?
- How does this change the way we think about reconciling relationships across lines of hostility?
- How does this change the way we think about the importance of church unity?

I can't answer these questions and say how anyone church family should look or function—each context will be different. Nor am I trying to command every church to care for their members better. I simply wish to encourage us to envision how our local church can be a community of faithful love—a family. My hope is that the Spirit of Christ would dwell in the midst of each individual family as they seek to display the heart of God within their church and their city.

I have been struck by Paul in his appeal to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 4:14–17). He admonishes them with these words: “For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers.” As their “father,” Paul has an affection for them that is beyond mere instruction. He wants them to follow Christ as he follows Christ. There is a deep love that goes into not just teaching the Bible to people, but walking alongside and caring for them so they can learn and delight in their Heavenly Father. I would echo that for the church today... I am convinced that we have thousands of teachers, but not enough fathers.

This isn't a call for fewer or smaller churches, but a call for more families who deeply love the Father and each other. It's a call for us to live out our primary identity as children of God in the family of God. In this family, love binds us together. It is a family made of people from all nations, genders, and economic status who all display the image of their Father in the world.

## About the Author



*Aaron Dailey is the husband to Dana and father to five children. He planted and has been a co-lead pastor of Redemption Church Alhambra for over 17 years. Aaron is also part of the leadership team for Redemption Church Arizona and the Surge network. He also serves as the Southwest Catalyst of City to City North America.*

(You can find this article, as well as other material, at <https://medium.com/redeemer-city-to-city/the-church-as-a-family-ccacfc987fc>)

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## Prayer and Disciple Development

Too often, we spend our time thinking about strategies and techniques to develop disciples instead of praying. Our focus is more on methods, whereas Jesus' focus was on men and women. Our time is spent with each other in planning and strategizing; Jesus' time was spent with His Father in communion and fellowship. His inward

union with His Father was the source of His success in building His disciples; if we are to excel in building disciples/leaders, our ministries must be born out of inward, living union with God as well (John 15:5).

Therefore, *our disciple development process must revolve around prayer.*

Jesus chose His new disciples in prayer. He was about to commit His entire future world-wide agenda to only a few men, so they had better be the right ones!

*One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles ... (Luke 6:12-13)*

Not only did Jesus commit His choice of leaders to God in prayer, but prayer was His first priority as He continued to build them. He didn't just pray Himself; He taught His disciples how to pray by His words and works.

They knew He spent entire nights in communion with His Father (Mark 1:35-37; Luke 6:12-13; Matt. 14:23). He not only prayed alone but also in the company of His disciples (Luke 11:1; 3:21; 9:28; Matt. 26:36). Jesus didn't merely teach a course on prayer; His disciples watched Him pray. After one of these times, His disciples were so conscious of their own comparative incapacity for prayer, they requested, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

In response to this request, Jesus taught them a simple form of prayer (Luke 11:2-4) and then shared one story emphasizing the need for perseverance in prayer (Luke 11:5-8) and another revealing the simplicity of faith in prayer (Luke 11:9-13).

At other times, Jesus taught them on prayer (Matt. 6:5-13; 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-26; Luke 18:1-7; John 16:23-24).

Jesus (and Paul!) consistently prayed *for* (Luke 22:32; cf. Col. 1:28 – 2:1; Gal. 4:19; 2 Tim. 1:3), *with* (Luke 11:1) and *over* their emerging disciples/leaders ((1 Tim. 4:14; cf. 2 Tim. 1:6).

To succeed, we must do the same. This is one of the first responsibilities of a leader who is building another: *he must lead him to know God*. Few disciples will learn to pray by themselves. They need to be taught, not just how to pray, but how to live in continual inward union with Christ. As Jesus lived in continual fellowship with His Father, He revealed and modeled that life to the disciples He was building:

*If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him ... Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father ... (John 14:7-9)*

Both from Jesus' life and from His teaching, His disciples learned to know the Father. They learned to pray. They learned to live in continual fellowship with God. They learned to trust God, to rely on Him in all situations. They learned to talk to God, to share with Him their deepest questions and struggles. They learned to look to God for everything – for the provision of all their needs, for the answers to all their questions. They learned to live in His presence. They learned to know God.

In saying this, we again draw a vast contrast between Biblical methods of discipleship development and most of our modern methods of building disciples.

Little (if any) attention is given to this great endeavor. Little time is devoted to teaching our new disciples to pray. Certainly, we are busy teaching them *about* prayer, but do we teach them *to pray*? There is no lack of courses and books about prayer today, but we must give our new leaders more: we must teach them actually to pray, we must teach them actually to know God, not only to know some facts about Him.

The key to effective discipleship is that our disciples know God and that they live and minister out of an inward union with Christ. This happens through prayer. Let's not just talk about prayer to those we have the privilege of discipling, but let us live and model to them a life of prayer.

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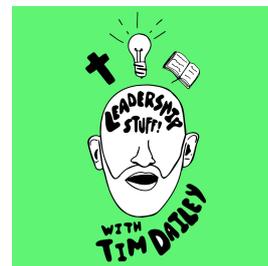
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This is just one more way that we want to stay connected as a "FRAMILY".

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