

AGE-INTEGRATED MINISTRY

By Mike Sciarra

I. Purpose of Age-Integrated Ministry

- Accomplish the Great Command (Loving God) and Great Commission (Making disciples) in present and future generations, both in and through households (Jesus, one another and the world).
- Understand the effectiveness of age-integrated ministry as a “mainstream” approach to growing in Christ and not as a “fringe” atypical approach.
- Courageously embrace, model and encourage these ideas long term even if they challenge established cultural norms within current church ideology.

II. Definitions of Age-Integrated Ministry Terms

- **Church** – The body of Christ, God’s family, the household of God (A multi-generational network of “living stones”, 1 Peter 2:4-5). A “Family of families”.
- **Family/Household** – “a covenant of relationships and responsibilities within the guidelines of Biblical principles”. Not just Dad, Mom and kids. Includes singles, single parents, grandparents, etc. Fits under the “umbrella” of the Body of Christ.
 - ❖ **The Biblical principles on which the family is based are:**
 - Honoring God first (the family is not an end in and of itself) (Col. 1:18)
 - Reflecting the character of Jesus in our relationships (Eph. 5:1; Col 2:6-7).
 - Demonstrating fidelity in marriage (1 Thess. 4:3-7; Heb 13:4)
 - Practicing chastity and purity in singleness (1 Thess. 4:3-7).
 - Nurturing the children God gives us (Ps. 127:3; Eph 6:4).
 - Showing lifelong care for family members (Eph. 6:1-2).
 - Maintaining a vital connection to a community of faith (Heb. 10:24-25).
- **Family Ministry/Age-Integrated Ministry** – ministry directed at the household or family unit rather than the individual members of the household or family.
 - ❖ **Core Values for Age-Integrated Ministry:**
 - Jesus must have first place in everything, including family life (Col. 1:18).
 - Marriage between a man and a woman is a gift from God. (Gen 1)
 - Children are gifts from God and welcome addition to a family (Ps.127:3).
 - A person’s first ministry is to their family or household (don’t neglect them as you minister to others. No “leapfrogging”).
 - Parents are the primary teachers of their children (Deut. 6:6-9; Eph. 6:1-3).
 - In the context of family life, the church’s role is to support the home.
 - If there is no Christ-centered influence, the church takes the role.
 - Experienced members of the Body must teach and mentor (Titus 2).
 - Christian community is inclusive of age groups (intergenerational - Heb 11; Josh 24:15; Matt 5-7), relational (1 Thess 2:7-8) and interwoven (not isolated, but integrated).
- **Family Discipleship** – the process of following Jesus in the context of the family or household to which a person belongs.

III. Foundations of Age-Integrated Ministry.

- The Church is a spiritual “family of families” (people know one another intimately, church leaders shepherd, body functions interactively. 1 Tim. 3:15).

- The family is a scripturally ordained household of parents, children and others (singles, widows, grandparents, etc.). (2 Tim. 4:19).
- God intends both church and family to carry out evangelism and discipleship through multiple generations (Deut. 6:2; Luke 1:50).
- The people of God are to be equipped for spiritual ministry and maturity through family-based, heart-level relationships, and by preparing heads of households (primarily fathers) to be servant-leaders in the family and church (1 Tim. 3:4-5).
- The Church's relationships transcend generational boundaries and are nurtured primarily through daily lifestyle discipleship, especially parents training their families and living the gospel in ministry to the body and witness to the world (Eph. 5:21-6:4).

IV. Implementation of Age-Integrated Ministry

- **Maintain a balance of age-integrated and age-segregated ministries.**
Age-integrated ministries to encourage:
 - ✓ Households/families worshipping together on Sunday mornings.
 - ✓ Households/families observing daily worship times (Word and prayer).
 - ✓ Households/Families in small groups together (Family Home Groups, FAST).
 - ✓ Households/Families serving the Lord together (Community and beyond).
- **Equip households for ministry through relationships rather than programs, preparing heads of households to be servant leaders in family and church.**
 - ✓ Celebrate, expose and fully embrace age-integrated ministries.
 - ✓ Teach people to take ownership for their family's spiritual well-being.
 - ✓ Adopting and engaging in this kind of ministry is not a guarantee, it is a more biblical way for the church to encourage people to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

V. Leading the way in Age-Integrated Ministry:

- **Believe it and live it!** Church leaders, can embrace, adopt and model an age-integrated church-home partnership with our families/households and our ministry areas. We can frequently publicly encourage an age-integrated, household-cooperative, church/home partnership.
- **Plan for it!** Weave it into our vision, values and goals. Encourage households to do the same things we encourage individuals to do. Make sure the calendar reflects partnership opportunities within each ministry area.
- **Pass it on!** Encourage people in our sphere of influence to embrace, adopt and model these things. If this is of God, He will give the necessary strength, wisdom and resources. He will work in and through us, and in spite of us, for His glory. Apart from Jesus we can do nothing (John 15:5), but we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13)!