

A Kingdom Growth Mindset in the Midlands of South Carolina

Serving as a Family of Baptist Congregations – Words of Challenge for CMBA

Fourth Dispatch

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(See, read, and downloaded this series of dispatches at www.BullardJournal.org.)

A tough issue for many congregations to address – especially when they have been plateaued and declining for a long time and become concerned about the viability of their long-term future – is the loss of families with children. Let's acknowledge that this is a church growth or church sustainability mindset issue and not a Kingdom growth mindset issue.

It is not about God's Kingdom coming and God's will being done. It is about our church surviving with vitality and vibrancy.

One difficult part of this issue is our motivation for reaching young adult families with children. The reasons congregations express for reaching these families are not always the real reasons. Here are 12 reasons which are either expressed or unexpressed. Many of them are not appealing to young adult families with children. They may prevent them from connecting with your congregation.

First, you want to reach them so your congregation will not die. Few families are ever interested in connecting with a congregation to keep it from dying. There are some who feel a missional call to help, but not many.

Second, you want to reach them so your congregation will appear to be healthy, robust, and inviting, when really it is not. Many families can see through your surface appearance and quickly realize the health or unhealth of the congregation.

Third, you want to reach them so they will attract more young adult families with children and help your church grow again. Yes, a critical mass is important to attract other families. Like attracts like.

Fourth, you want them to come soon so your children and grandchildren will not leave and go to another congregation with a larger number of people and programs, and more engaging worship. So, you are not interested in the new families for their sake, you want them to connect with your congregation for your sake?

Fifth, you want to reach them without having to make changes in your congregation – especially in how you worship. If God inspires you to reach young families with children, then you will want your worship to connect with them and inspire them.

Sixth, you want them to be workers in the programs and activities of the congregation, but not leaders with influence and authority as you have those roles covered. You want them to be part of the active congregation without having a voice in the policies and direction of the congregation.

Seventh, you want to reach them because you have too many empty rooms on Sunday that need people in them. You need to see if anything in the Bible says that the motivation for

reaching people is so that the facilities you built – because if you build it, they will come – attract many people.

Eighth, you want them to be the workers for your community ministries as the older adult leading them are tired or unable to do so anymore. What you may find is that these families have a different perspective on how to do community ministry, and may want to start something they believe is more relevant and effective in connecting with the people.

Ninth, you want them to be tithers like your generation as the finances of the congregations are not what they once were. Unfortunately, much research says that younger generations express their biblical stewardship and generosity in very different ways than earlier generations.

Tenth, you want them to understand the hidden logistical rules in the congregation, which you assume any church culture people would already know. Hanging all around your church facilities are signs you have memorized that are invisible to new families as to how things should work within the church, such as “No drinks in the Worship Center.” Typically, no one tells new families about these rules.

Eleven, you want the pastor and any existing staff to reach them as you do not intend to do anything proactive to reach them. Isn't that what we hire pastors and staff to do? No, it is not. Yet many people feel that it is. Some congregations even hire a minister to young adult families and believe that will work to reach them.

Twelve, you want them to stay when they discover your future story of missional ministry involved targeting them to achieve a successful future for the congregation. Uh oh! New families you reach may realize that reaching them was not about them. It was about you.

Next, in the *Fifth Dispatch*, let's talk about the capacities needed and the sacrifices needed to reach young adult families with children. Oh, and how a Kingdom mindset may help this.