



Family Discipleship : Revival Begins at Home



Bambang Budijanto, Ph.D.
General Secretary of
the Asia Evangelical Alliance

1. Introduction

The Bible teaches that disciple making begins at home, but how many Christian families are actually doing it? How many churches have emphasized this function? And how well are we doing it? The quality of family discipleship became a crucial issue during the COVID-19 pandemic. People couldn't attend church, so there was no Sunday school for children. Thus, the spiritual nurture of young people depended solely on their parents. COVID-19 has opened the eyes of many pastors to their church members' often inadequate efforts to disciple their own children in the faith. Recent data collected by Indonesia's Bilangan Research Center are sobering, exposing a need for the church to become more intentional in equipping parents to make disciple at home. Let's look at some Bible passages that reveal to us what God expects of Christian parents.

2. The Birth of the New Nation

After some 400 years in Egypt, where the people of Israel grew from 70 people to around 2 million, and after witnessing God's hand in bringing the ten plagues upon Egypt, the Israelites were ready to declare themselves a new and independent nation. Once the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they were free (Exodus 14). Soon after that, in Exodus 18, Moses set up the judicial system, and starting in chapter 20 God declared the law for this new nation.

IN THIS ISSUE

Family Discipleship

1

Church Planting in
Mongolia

5

Why Church needs
disaster response

8

Vietnam Evangelical
Alliance

12

Churches Facing
Challenges during
the Red Alert of
COVID-19 pandemic
in Bangladesh

13

Leadership Mission
Seminar Pakistan

15

Relief and
Development
Commission

16

D6 Family Ministry
Conference

19

Women Commission
Webinar

20

Youth Commission
Webinar

21



As Moses was preparing for the Israelites' departure from Egypt, just after the tenth and final plague, he delivered a very important speech. His key message was that the way to sustain their freedom and God's blessings upon them was through family education. The perpetuation and fullness of God's blessings depended on instruction at home, where parents were to educate their children on God's acts in history (Ex. 13:8, 14; see also Ex. 12:26-27). Forty years later, in his farewell speech, Moses reminded his people that in contrast to other nations around them, the design of the nation of Israel was structured around family education (Deut. 6:7-9). A short time later, as Joshua led the people to claim the promised land, he reemphasized this unique design of family education (Josh. 4:6, 21-22).

3. The Birth of the New Season

Toward the end of Old Testament times, as people waited desperately for a national restoration, a spiritual and political revival, and the coming of the Messiah, they looked to the temple and the priests with huge expectations. In response, God told them that revival would begin from home, as "He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents" (Mal. 4:6)

On the day of Pentecost, when the church was born, Peter declared the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28) about the coming of the Day of the Lord, the day of restoration. This prophecy seems to have been addressed to every household head in Israel, so that they could see and recognize the coming spiritual revival by observing how different members of the household contributed to the Kingdom of God—their younger children, teenagers, parents, and even slaves. Revival would begin when "your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18).



4. The Birth of the Church's New Landscape

An inaccurate reading of the Great Commission has placed significantly greater emphasis on discipleship in the mission field, marketplace and public sphere at the expense of family discipleship. The emphasis on the phrase “therefore go,” instead of “as you are going” or “wherever you are going” (present participle), has unintentionally reduced the church's focus on disciple making at home.

Additionally, family discipleship has been further weakened by the tendency to view Sunday School (or children's church) as the primary venue for the spiritual nourishment of children. Although it's certainly true that in many parts of the world, Sunday School or children's church has contributed significantly toward bringing children to Christ, it cannot and must not replace the disciple-making process that should occur at home.

COVID-19 has introduced a new landscape for the church. One of the most important church assets during lockdowns is family discipleship. Due to the spread of the virus, during the past 18 months churches in many parts of the world have not been able to worship together in their church building or elsewhere. They could conduct worship only online. Those churches who had a strong emphasis on family discipleship before the pandemic have grown stronger during the pandemic. On the other hand, those churches that did not focus on equipping family units to worship together and implement disciple making at home have grown weaker.

A recent (March 2021) national survey conducted by the Bilangan Research Center found that fewer than 20 percent of Christians were maintaining regular family or household worship. This figure marked only a slight increase relative to the period before the pandemic. We can deduce that the percentage of Indonesian Christians conducting family discipleship (i.e., disciple making at home, not just worshipping together at home) is even lower.

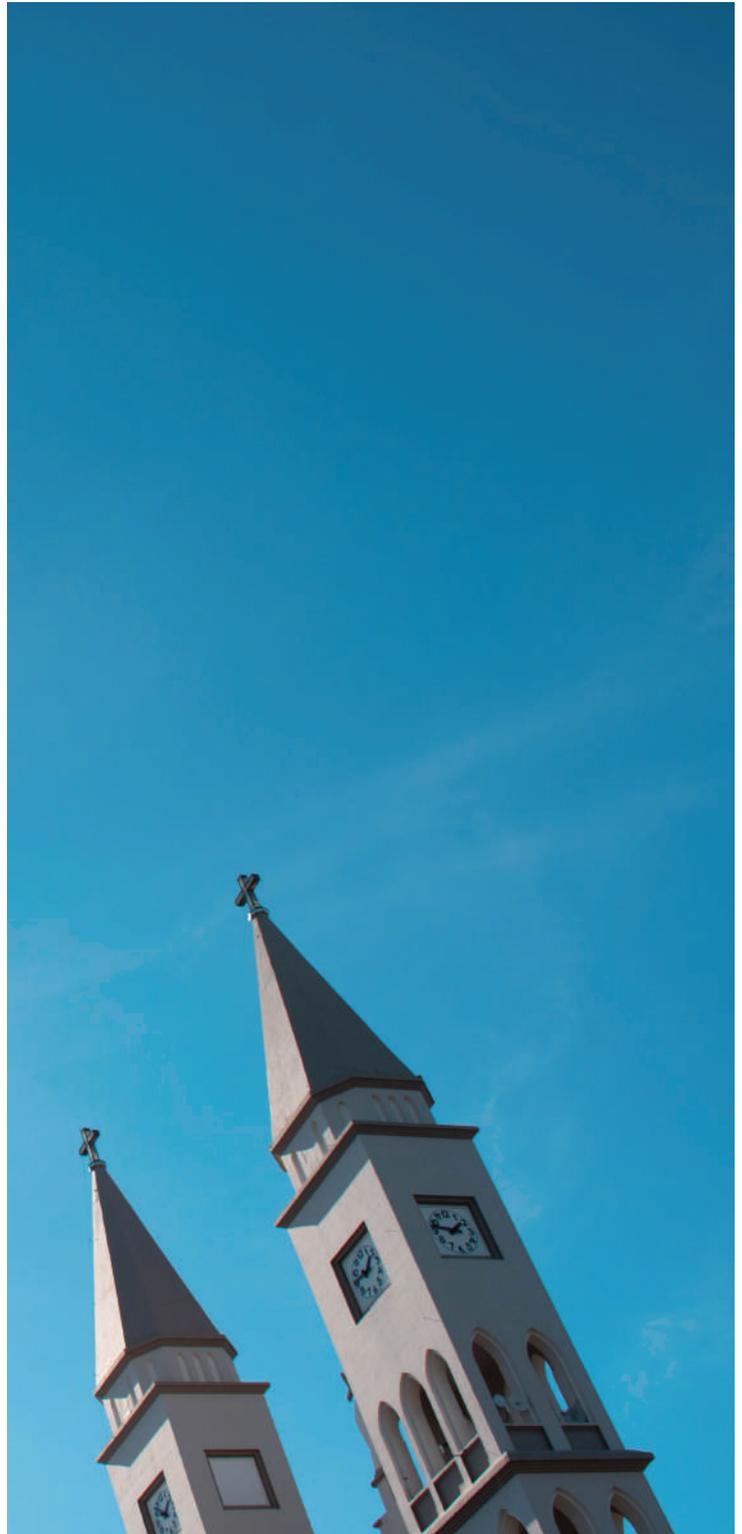
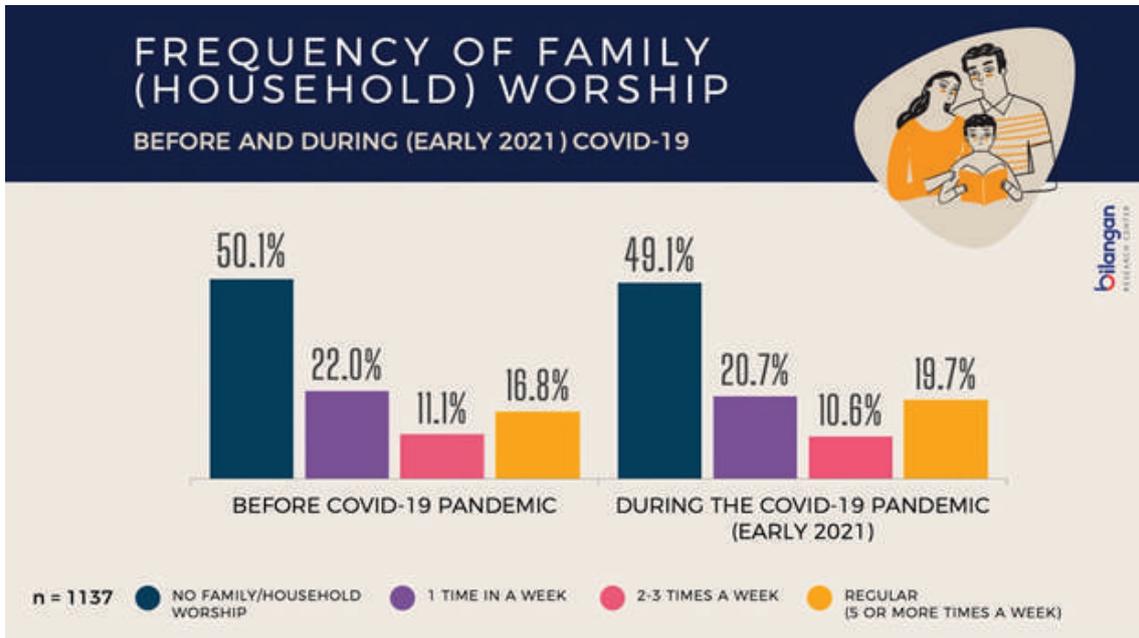


Photo by Lucas George Wendt on Unsplash

Family Discipleship : Revival Begins at Home



After 18 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which in-person church gatherings have been replaced by online services, many pastors have been concerned about the spiritual well-being of their congregations. How many of their church members would continue in their faith, let alone grow spiritually, without regular on-site services and Sunday schools? The COVID-19 experience, though painful, has opened the eyes of many pastors as to where we are in terms of family discipleship.

Many churches have been focusing their energy either on preparing for a return to on-site worship post-COVID or on strengthening their online (digital) services. The data from Indonesia suggest that too few have committed themselves to equipping and strengthening the capacity of parents to disciple their children at home and to lead family (household) worship effectively. ■