

The Teaching Church

*Moving Christian Education
to Center Stage*

Key Themes

- Christian education is more than education; there must be an emphasis on nurture.
- Values in educational strategies from the past must be reclaimed.
- New models of Christian education must be discovered and implemented.
- Christian education must be viewed holistically, not as a separate entity.

Introduction

- Are churches at risk? According to study by Search Institute churches are facing:
 - Declining memberships
 - Increased illiteracy about the Bible and the faith
 - A fear that faith was being reduced to a superficial, peripheral part of life for many professing Christians
 - Failure to attract young adults and young families
 - An inactivity in congregational life
 - Loss of members
 - A loss of denominational identity

Introduction

- Four conclusions that are the heart of this book:
 - In general, U. S. Christians don't have a mature faith.
 - Christian education is the most important vehicle within congregational life for helping people grow in their faith.
 - Despite its potential impact, most congregations don't have effective Christian education.
 - Concrete changes in churches can improve educational effectiveness and help people to grow in faith.

Objective

- To challenge churches to reflect creatively and intentionally about their Christian education. Then, based on a congregation's specific needs and heritage, church leaders can create their own vision of effective Christian education and find a way to make that vision a reality.

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- Why do we want people to come to church?
- First, to grow in their faith.
- And second, to become loyal, active parts of the community.
- How do we get there?
- Through Christian education – the area of church life that has the most influence on faith maturity and growth in faith.
- So if our goal is to nurture faith and loyalty in the congregation, nothing in church life matters more than Christian education.

Factors that Have the Greatest Influence on Growth in Faith

- Lifetime church involvement
- Lifetime involvement in effective Christian education
- Friends and spouse religiousness
- Involvement in a caring church
- Involvement in nonchurch religious activity
- Serving others
- Family religiousness during childhood and youth

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- So while effective Christian education isn't the only thing that matters in church life, it is by far the most influential factor in nourishing faith.
- Thus, if congregations want to enhance people's faith and loyalty, the best approach is to involve members in effective Christian education.

Church's Primary Responsibility

- Equipping the saints for ministry. The church structure and institution should empower people for ministry, rather than accomplishing the ministry for them.
- The challenge to congregations, then, is to help each member see himself or herself as an active minister – as a representative of Christ in the world.

Christian Education – What is it?

- In the study and in this book, Christian education is defined broadly as programs and events intentionally offered by a congregation to teach faith to children, teenagers, and adults.

Issues Facing Christian Education

- Lack of member involvement in Christian education
- Ineffective Christian education programs
 - Youth Education
 - Adult Education
 - Educational Foundations – teacher training, teacher faith formation, planning, pastor's training, evaluation

Myths about Christian Education

- “Christian education is for children.”
- “A good Christian education program is a big Christian education program.”
- “Good teaching means transferring information.”
- “Teaching can occur without training.”
- “Christian education is separate from the rest of congregational life.”

Eight Marks of Faith Maturity

- Trusting and Believing
- Believing the Fruits of Faith
- Integrating Faith and Life
- Seeking Spiritual Growth
- Nurturing Faith in Community
- Holding Life-affirming Values
- Advocating Social Change
- Acting and Serving

Two Dimensions of Faith

- First, a Life-Transforming Relationship to a Loving God - the vertical dimension of faith
- Second, a Consistent Devotion to Serving Others – the horizontal dimension of faith

Promoting Faith Through Congregational Life

- Although Christian education has the greatest potential for promoting faith, there are five other elements in congregational life that play important roles in promoting faith in youths and adults.
- The more each factor is present in a congregation, the greater the faith maturity among members.

Promoting Faith Through Congregational Life

- Five elements other than Christian education play an important role in promoting faith:
 - 1) A Warm Climate
 - 2) A Thinking Climate
 - 3) Uplifting Worship
 - 4) Receiving Care
 - 5) Service to Others

A Warm Climate

- Has the greatest influence upon a person's loyalty to the congregation.
- To create a warm climate
 - Make everyone feel included.
 - Help members develop strong interpersonal skills.
 - Make visitors feel welcome.
 - Assimilate new members into church life.

A Thinking Climate

- Is invaluable in helping people grow in their faith, as well as their loyalty.
- Churches with thinking climates:
 - Expect people to devote time to thought and study.
 - Expect members to grow and learn and think for themselves.
 - Encourage people to ask tough questions about themselves, their world, and God.

A Thinking Climate

- Must be part of the fabric of everything in congregational life.
- Must encourage questions.
- Must be a safe place to express diverse opinions.
- Members are challenged to examine their faith in their everyday lives.
- People are led to discover answers.

Uplifting Worship

- Stimulates, instructs, and guides the minds of believers.
- Content of worship defines an approved style of life.

Uplifting Worship

- Kennon L. Callahan, in *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* suggests five factors that contribute to corporate, dynamic worship:
 1. The warmth and winsomeness of the service and the congregation.
 2. The dynamic and inspiration of the worship.
 3. The character and quality of preaching.
 4. The power and movement of the liturgy.
 5. The seating range of the sanctuary.

Sense of Family

- Members receive “care.”
- Ways to nourish a caring climate:
 - Christian Education
 - Small Groups
 - Shepherding Programs
 - Special Needs

Service to Others

- Build on congregational identity.
- Raise awareness.
- Build on individual members' concerns.
- Create opportunities for service.
- Link with other churches and organizations.
- Work with the youth.

Managing An Effective Christian Education Program

- Program Planning and Development
 - Planning
 - Coordination of Study
 - Evaluation

Models for Christian Education

- Religious Instruction
- Faith Community
- Spiritual Development
- Liberation
- Interpretation

Leaders Make a Difference

- Effective Teachers
- Christian Education Coordinators
- Support from the Church's Governing Body
- Pastors as Teachers
- Rethink Leadership
 - Meaning Interpretation
 - Community Formation
 - Empowering Public Ministry

Action Steps

- Become intentional about Christian education
- Reexamine programs for children, youth, and adults
- Build on interests & needs of members/community
- “Market” Christian Education

Q & A

Questions.....



Resource

- The Teaching Church

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