

Changing One Word Can Make a HUGE Difference

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Words mean things

Words have the power to create (Genesis 1) and the power to destroy (James 3:6). Even a good-intentioned but poor word choice can still unwittingly work against success in any endeavor.

In my work with church leaders, I have observed increasingly that using the term "household approach" can be much more effective at helping church leaders –and their congregations– embrace this dynamic vision.

Household is more biblically accurate

Consider that "household" is a more biblically accurate term as it is almost always the meaning of the word translated "family" in the Bible. A household is more than dad, mom, and the kid(s), i.e. what today we call a nuclear family. **Household** *includes rather than excludes* extended family related by blood and by the Holy Spirit (church).

Household is a term that unifies

The individualism that is killing our nation, has seeped into our churches to the point that family is seen as just another individual group vying for money and air time alongside missions, singles, and seniors. However, the true meaning of family in the Bible, as noted above provides an inclusiveness, or unity, that is biblically descriptive of who WE are and how WE as the church are to minister and fulfill the Great Commission. This goes well beyond the typical understanding of family.

Think about it. When you help "the family" you help dad, mom and the kid(s). However, if you help "the household", you help dad, mom, the kids AND the singles, AND the youth, AND the seniors; everybody benefits and that in a far greater way that has a multi-generational aspect to it.

Household describes God's purpose in redemption: preparing A People for His own possession

Consider further that the focus of redemption is the preparation of a *people* for God's own possession (Jer. 31:33). Households are the primary means by which God identifies, seeks, wins, builds, and sends His Church, but the family is not the sole focus of God's plan. Jesus died for a *people*.

I have seen churches focus on nuclear families so singularly that they have fallen into a trap where the nuclear family becomes the focus of the church not vice-versa. Isolation and moralism have been the result.

My book, *Uniting Church and Home*, is sub-titled, *A Blueprint for Rebuilding Church Community* for a reason. I see the problem of family breakdown in the same way I see the problems we seek to address through youth, singles, senior's, and our other affinity programs. These problems are all symptomatic of a much more rudimentary problem: broken, dysfunctional church community; community that is out of relationship with its Head; Jesus Christ.

In order for the church to be healthy it must function as God designed it, as a household of households. Rebuilding church community this way does not necessarily mean the cessation of all affinity programs. Some churches find that these programs can still be useful when re-organized around the household principles found in the Bible. Some churches find that they are able to function without these programs entirely.

One size does not fit all. What is important is Holy Spirit-led application of household principles which will require some changes, over time, to how we go about ministry programming.

Our purpose involves the nuclear family but goes beyond it

My goal therefore, is not simply to help churches fix families, rather my goal is to help churches build community through household relationships as we see evidenced and taught in the Bible. Households themselves are at the core of this effort, as a model of biblical relationships and as the primary ministry unit (Gen. 12:3; Acts 2:44). Churches that grasp this vision, *this way*, have had the privilege of seeing church community *and outreach* blossom in a way that strengthens everyone, including households. (Please see *Uniting Church and Home Report Volume Two* for some excellent examples!)

Helping churches grasp this wonderful vision involves more than good intentions. It involves the use of the clearest terms. I encourage you to consider the words you use in explaining this vision to your fellow leaders and households. Make sure they describe what you really mean or else you may be undermining your efforts.