

Hints from three generations doing Home Church - Train up your children

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We are now on our third generation of doing home church. We raised our kids in service to the community, and by the time they were teenagers, they were already able to see issues and problems, and to come up with ways to resolve those problems. They taught dance and gymnastics, martial arts, did WAIT, participated in all the clean ups and events we did. Now, in their late 20s and early 30s, they are taking the lead in the community. Not only in the elected roles, but in organizing community wide events. And their children--who range from 8 down to 8 months--are all actively helping too. They help us deliver the monthly newsletter to each door, and pick up trash.

In our experience, home church is really about thinking as a messiah. We often do "95%" of a certain project, but always build in a "5%" for the other person to do, to give them ownership. We encourage them to take responsibility. We honor them when they do. The idea isn't to shackle ourselves to being the fulltime caretakers, but to raise each person to be autonomous owners of the work.

Here are a few points we've learned over the years. Perhaps they might be of help to others:

1) When faced with a difficult problem, talk to God about it. Be aware of the inspiration when it comes. I usually get a kind of "vision" of how it could work, sometimes with a direct message.

2) Activities don't have to be big, obvious or even seen to be impactful. Small, unseen, invisible actions...carried out over a given period of time, can often have a big impact. Bringing in someone's groceries, mail, or garbage bins, might be a small act, but it shows people your character and caring for them.

3) Positive change starts with positive thinking. It's important to transition away from "criticism" and "complaint" into "constructive thought" and "love."

4) Information is power. One of the ways you can serve is to bring information that gives them new tools and options. Some examples:

- * a newsletter
- * educational sessions
- * interview people and share the finished report
- * Tutoring
- * sharing existing services or programs they can access
- * making a website

5) Money is not a problem. Whenever you need something, if you are working for a public purpose, the things you need will become available to you. We found that we would invest our own money or things first, and often, later, it would be reimbursed or funded by some other entity.

6) Every activity, project, event or program should encourage and engage people to bring their own talents and abilities to it, and thereby, gain joy. DP 101.

7) Give away credit. Thank everyone. Honor each person specifically. Make it a win-win.

8) Don't shrink from the worst situation. We have encountered homelessness, dementia, hoarding, addiction, rape, unemployment and so many other issues. We are often dealing with things that involve shame, hiding, or negative emotional cycles. There is often a sense of inadequacy or powerlessness when we feel we don't have all the answers. What we've learned is that there are others who have the specific skills sets we lack, but we play a key role in walking with the person to get them to the next step. Sometimes, they need someone to cry with them, pray with them, drive them to the place where they can get the direct help. Treat them like a member of your own family.

9) Have fun, create joy, live in a celebratory way. Even if you are poor or tired or having difficulties, if you can find a way to have fun, the picture will change. Singing, dancing, finding the humor in the situation...is free. Finding a way to be happy helps turn "hell" into heaven.

10) Everyone is a human. Rich, poor, old or young, everyone is immensely gifted and powerful, even when they don't know it. And everyone is also suffering, usually with something they keep quiet about. The biggest miracles happen when you can see someone's gifts, and ask them to use those to help others (which is a huge way of helping them experience God) and also, when you can enable them to face their issues without fear. Two important mottos: "satan is a liar." and "every person is the dwelling place of God."

11) To destroy the false, build and strengthen the true. If you want to help people overcome something bad, help them build up their true nature, true abilities, true character, and live in true love.

12) Know that every issue you tackle, everything you invest, every kindness you extend--is radiated out to the larger world. Small things are multiplied to bless many more than the original person or group you are acting for. A study showed that people who do altruistic deeds experience "joy" chemicals in the brain--but so do those who witness the deed, hear about the deed, or read about the deed. Altruism and service to others spreads happiness. You never lose by serving.

13) Know that God is with you always, and may be speaking to you from any situation. Answers are everywhere. Need is everywhere. It may sound crazy, but you are the key point, and all the universe will come to work with you, when you have that public mind and the mind of ownership.

14) If you are in a hostile situation, take a snapshot of the "enemy's" face in your mind. Mentally photoshop that face, to see them and the situation healed. See them happy, loving, kind, forgiving, supportive--whatever you would want for them. Everytime you think of them, replace the old "picture" with your new "portrait." Act based on this view of how you want the relationship to be. Within a very short time, the image you created will become substantially realized.

15) When you have a need, yourself, don't worry or cry or berate yourself. Do something positive for others, and find a way to be joyful. Your need will be answered, usually by someone directly in your community, or someone you encounter through your home church work. Expect miracles!

These are just a few things we've learned. I thought I would share them, in case they are helpful for others.