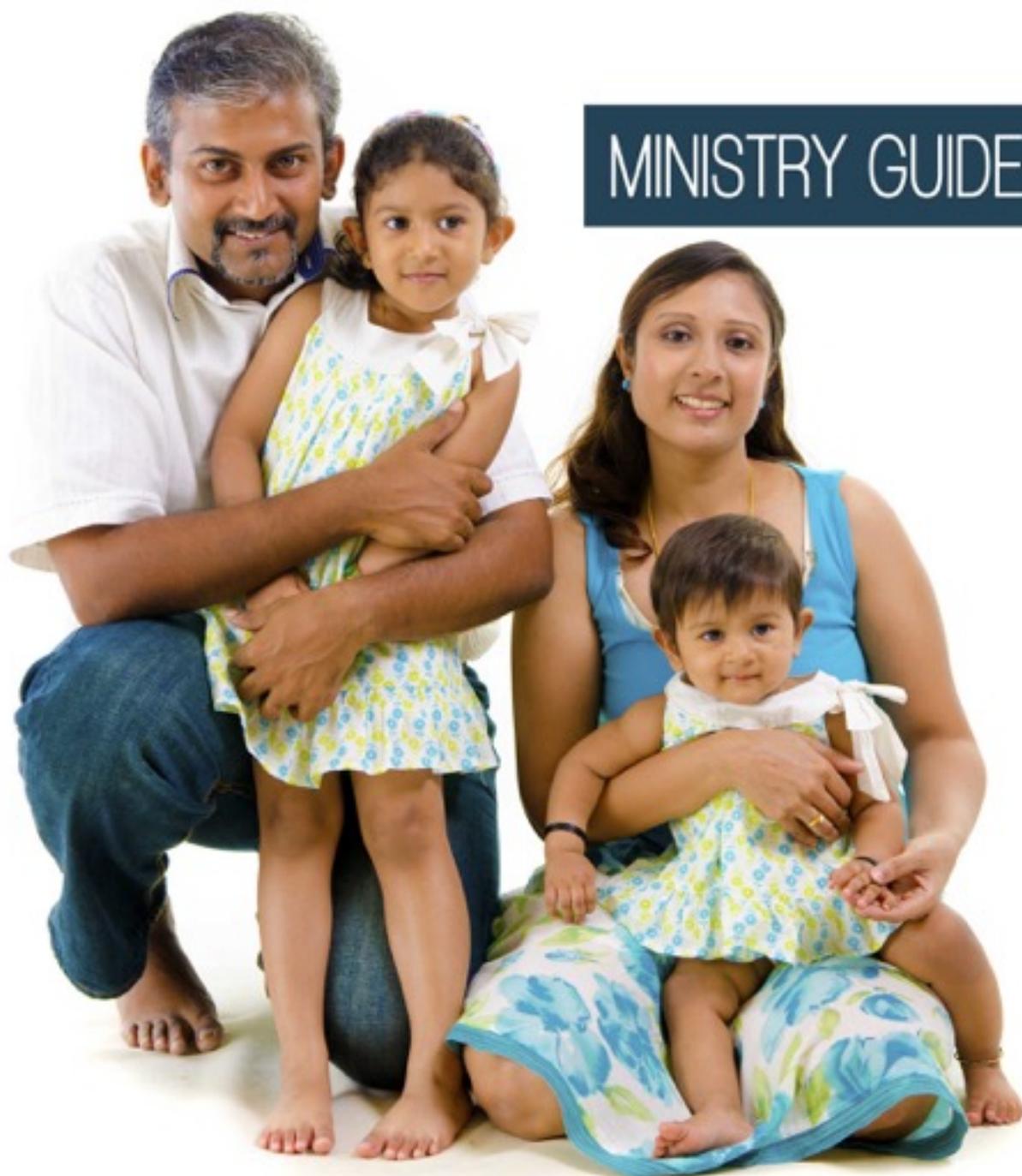


STEPPING FORWARD IN FAMILY MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

MINISTRY GUIDE



FAMILY CHALLENGE TEAM

A. Introduction

We want to congratulate you for the courage to take this bold step forward in exploring ways as to how you could actively be involved in building healthy families in the church ministry environment.

The core aim of this Guide is to outline pertinent information you may need in mapping out key steps you could take in developing the families in your ministry. Furthermore, the hope is that this information will help you take them from where they currently are to where you desire them to be.

In keeping with the above focus, this Guide is prepared with the following assumptions.

- That you have adequate understanding of the theological and accompanying reasons for the church to build strong family ministry and you are greatly convicted of the vital need to build this ministry in the church.
- That you subscribe to the theology that ministry to the home is a part of the discipleship structure of the church. Family ministry is really about family discipleship.
- That you fully accept the definitions of what a healthy family and family ministry are as contained in the international version of Booklet 2 of the National Family Ministry Conversation Initiative of Family Challenge.
- That you are in agreement with the core values of the Transform World movement and the contents of the Biblical Foundations Statement of Family Challenge.

Although this Guide is prepared primarily for those who minister in the following adverse church environments, we believe recognition of the following realities would also be helpful to those who have already travelled a distance in developing the family ministry.

- Ministries in the church are organized in “silos.”
- Building healthy families is not a key emphasis of the church. Prevailing ministry to the families consist of periodic family events, such as Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, and ad hoc need-based-response programs. A common tendency of the church, in response to a family life struggle, is to conduct a program to try to “fix it.”
- There are few opportunities for intergenerational interactions.
- There is disengagement between church and home in the church ministries in general.

B. Stepping Forward

1. Introduction

There are three key areas to which one needs to pay close attention during the process or the attempt to develop a strengthened program for the family in a church setting.

1. The stakeholders.
2. The church and home cultures.
3. The culture change process.

2. Main Stakeholders

The success of our endeavor in family ministry weighs heavily on how effectively we are when challenging and mobilizing the following groups inside the church body towards discipling the family as a way of corporate church life.

- a. The church leadership.
- b. The congregation.
- c. The family.

a. Church Leadership

There will be little progress toward a powerful family ministry without taking the first step. We strongly believe that first step begins with the gatekeeper (pastor). Lacking his blessing, it is doubtful the ministry will survive in the long-run because it will be necessary for him to use his pulpit to promote and sell it to the congregation. It is equally critical that he supports other actions that are designed to change the normally highly-resistant church and home cultures.

When the senior pastor is on board, perhaps the highest peak family ministry has to climb has indeed been scaled.

With that, we also need to secure the buy-in of the leadership teams and key influencers of the church in order to succeed over time.

b. Congregation

This is a part of the church often overlooked by those involved in planning for family ministry development.

They are critical to us in a number of ways.

- Families – an integral part of the congregation -- are our key stakeholders.
- Each member of the congregation can play an influential role in their families.
- This is where we find a reservoir of gifts/talents needed to “equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12). In other words, the equippers of family discipleship are found amongst the congregation.

- We need them (of all ages) to come alongside the families and support the family as they embark on this arduous journey of sustained “family health-building.”

Therefore, their commitment to the category of family ministry we espouse is critical to long-term sustainability of our endeavor.

Family discipleship also enhances spiritual vitality of the body of Christ, especially among those directly involved in it.

Note: The “church leadership” and the “congregation” are hereinafter jointly referred to as the “church.”

c. Family

The foundational biblical understanding, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, is that the parents, not the church, are responsible for the spiritual training of children.

God created the family as the primary "institution" to pass its faith to the next generation, not the church.

A family with Christians does not naturally grow to function as the above statement asserts. In fact, on the whole, the opposite is true. In reality, the prevailing family living environment is hostile to any attempt to turn the heart of the family members towards God.

Therefore, it is important to secure strong commitment of the family to take the journey with the church.

3. Church and Family Cultures

a. The Culture

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines culture as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group” or “the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time.”

Culture is powerful. It has tremendous influence over how people think, feel, and interact with one another. It explains the way life is mostly lived in the church and in the family.

The culture is likened to the conditions of the soil in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-8, 18-23). If the conditions for growing the seed are right, the seed would ultimately grow to produce a fruitful crop.

Every church has its unique culture, the result of culmination of interplays of many factors that brought this about. So does the family; each family culture is unique in many ways on its own.

When the conditions (cultures) in the church and in the family are right for growing healthy families, such families will be a natural reality in the church body. These are the kinds of the cultures we are seeking to establish in our churches.

We shall refer to these cultures as “the family-friendly culture”¹ as defined below.

This is the way of life in the church where families are intentionally and systematically developed with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be healthy in key building blocks across the life span; faith formation, marriage, parenting, human sexuality, resource management, adulthood and aging, and non-nuclear family.

The tables in Sections B (3) (b) 2 &3 below describe this culture in more detail.

b. The Ministry Cultures

1) Status Analysis

a) The Church Culture

Though the global church, for various reasons, pays significant attention to disciple-making in fulfilling the Great Commission, this is not intentionally happening a lot in the home of the Christian.

God’s mandate is for the church to also disciple its members to live godly family life.

The church is usually reactive to family struggles, rather than being preventive in their approach to ministry to the family. A common tendency of the church, in response to a family life struggle, is to quickly create and conduct a program to try to “fix it.” This approach is typically ad hoc, stand-alone, and often inadequate, in the absence of a proper ministry framework (with all the relevant programs in place) that is effective in meeting all the family needs. In the context of the family dynamic, a problem that surfaces in one area of the family could be intricately linked to other hidden areas of it.

Those churches that do run fairly extensive family ministry are not automatically effective in ensuring that the passing of the faith from one generation to the next is happening at home. Building faith at home is a focus that has to be intentionally developed as an integral part of the family ministry framework of a church.

The church-centric philosophy (the emphasis of the church growth movement) is keeping the church from paying adequate attention to raising the next generation in a decidedly strong faith.

The church has adopted the church-centered home-supported (church-centric)² philosophy of ministry, expecting church members to serve the church ministries without adequate attention given to

¹ This term was first coined by Professor Ben Freudenburg in his book that he co-authored with Rick Lawrence, ‘The Family-friendly Church’, published in 1989 by Group Publishing Inc., Loveland, Colorado Springs, Colorado, U.S.A. We shall elaborate on this in the later section.

² This term was also coined by Professor Ben Freudenburg in the above book, ‘The Family-friendly Church’.

the conditions of their homes. (A “God-will-raise-my-children-while-I-do-His-work” mentality).

The church usually organizes various ministries to minister to needs of various categories of members; pre-schooler, children, youth, single adults, men, women, etc. Training the parents to teach spiritual formation at home is not directly connected to or involved in the flow of these ministries.

b) The Family Culture

There is a lack of strong discipleship by the church for the family in faith formation, marriage, parenting, sexuality, home leadership, aging care, etc.

Left to themselves, the Christian family is facing a myriad of unprecedented struggles in this present culture.

The church, for various reasons and for a long time (close to two centuries), has generally accepted and shouldered the primary responsibility for faith formation of the children and youth. As a result, the parents have become passive partners in such endeavors.

2) Comparative Cultures: The Church

The table below outlines the comparative church cultures on family ministry. Depending on how developed your family ministry is, you may find a mixture of these two cultures in your prevailing ministry environment.

Prevailing Culture	Family-friendly Culture
<p>A general lack of understanding and conviction concerning the heart of God for the family among the church leadership and the congregation. Therefore, little attention is given to the conditions of the families of the membership.</p>	<p>The big “why” for the family-friendly culture is widely embraced by all. The church gives right priority to building healthy families in their midst.</p>
<p>Church-centered, home-supported (church-centric) philosophy, where members are expected to serve in various ministries without adequate attention given to the condition of the home.</p>	<p>Home-centered, church-supported (family centric) philosophy. Here we see each family being intentionally disciplined in family relationships.</p>
<p>The measurements of success do not include how well families are growing.</p>	<p>The health of the families is one key performance index to which the church pays adequate attention.</p>
<p>Inadequate resources (human and others) are allocated to look after the families.</p>	<p>Sufficient human resources are developed and other resources to support the family-building task.</p>

Prevailing Culture	Family-friendly Culture
The church is taking the primary responsibility for faith formation of the next generation.	The church is living out its right place in its relationship with the families; being the equipper to the family members (spouses, parents, children, and faith shapers) “for works of service” (Ephesians 4:11-13).
The church is taking the primary responsibility for faith formation of the children; the parents are passive partners in such endeavor.	A strong partnership between the church and the family of discipleship in the home expressed in the church, training those in the congregation intentionally in order to equip the parents with the capacity to be their children’s primary faith shapers.
Home leadership is underemphasized in church ministry.	Training of the father is a key part of the family discipleship structure of the church.
The church treats all families the same in their ministry.	The church recognizes the needs of the family in different areas (faith formation, marriage, parenting, single parents, blended families etc.) and their challenges over a life span (birth to old age) and seeks to minister to these holistically.
The church is reactive to family struggles, rather being preventive in their approach to ministry to the family. A common tendency of the church, in response to a family life struggle, is to conduct a program to try to “fix it.”	The church has a holistic strategy to build the health of the family and implement this systematically. This consists of a well-planned change management process to implement it.
Emphasis of intergenerational discipleship is either absent or weak in the corporate discipleship structure, even when the church is currently active in running various other family ministry programs.	Building faith at home is a key focus of the church and is an integral part of its family ministry framework.
Silo programming approach to organizing church ministers to meet needs.	An integration of the ministry programs, focusing on building of the family.
Church activities and practices are not encouraging family-relationship-building.	The church leadership is mindful of the needs of the families in their planning and implementation of programs and activities.
Prayer and intercession for families are not a major focus of the church.	Praying and interceding for the families are an integral part of church life. Families are committed to being equipped to live a prayerful lifestyle.

3) Comparative Cultures: The Family

The two cultures of the family are shown below.

Prevailing Culture	Family-friendly Culture
Christian adults of the family have inadequate understanding and conviction of the divine call for them to build a Godly, healthy family. They consider their family life to be a personal arena very much separate from the church life. They would usually resist any 'intrusion' into this space.	The family knows their biblical relationship with the church community and welcomes discipleship of and in home life.
The family is very much on their own battling with their struggles.	The family, embraced by the church community, is being well supported by the latter.
The family relies very much on human culture, traditions, and a limited understanding of God's Word to live together.	The church equips the family with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to live a Godly and Biblical way of life.
The family is the docile recipient of the church-driven, faith-building process.	The family is actively partnering with the church leadership and the congregation in the growing of their own faith.
Considering the church to be responsible for the faith-formation development of their children, parents play a passive role in this.	The parents embrace God's call to be the primary faith-shapers of their children and are adequately equipped and resourced by the church for it and proactive in it.
The parent does not have adequate understanding and conviction of the brevity of the parenting windows and the need to seize the nurturing opportunities at hand.	There is a sense of urgency of the parent to train "...a child in the way he should go [teaching him to seek God's wisdom and will for his abilities and talents]..." Proper priority is given to this development.
The family is sparingly trained to handle home living issues. Biblical illiteracy is one result of this.	The family is developed with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for healthy home living.
The family, embroiled in their own struggles, does not focus on reaching out to others.	The family is deliberate and active in engaging the families in the community.

4. Developing the Family-friendly Culture

a. Critical Success Factors

With the family-friendly cultures of the church and family we aspire to have (gleaned from the tables above) as the measurements of success of our endeavor, we now can determine those critical factors we need in order to cultivate the cultures. These are what we are aiming for: the "goals."

Measurement of Success	Critical Success Factor	
	The Church Leadership & Congregation	The Family
Adequate understanding and conviction of the “whys” of family discipleship, giving proper priority to it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To study and communicate the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆Theology of family discipleship. ◆The prevailing conditions of the family in the church and outside of it. ◆The brevity of the window of child-nurturing opportunities for the parents. ◆Other key reasons for giving attention to this. ▪ To give regular emphasis to this in the church and the family. 	
Having the paradigm of home-centered, church-supported (family centric).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To study the comparisons between the church-centered, home-supported (church-centric) philosophy and that of home-centered, church-supported (family centric). 	
Health of the family is a key performance index.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To incorporate the family discipleship emphasis into the mission, vision and core value statements of the church. ▪ To make family health become a key factor in the church performance monitoring framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To place family health as one of the top priority areas that the family assesses at regular intervals.
Holistic development framework of the family is in place, including faith-building at home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To have an operational family development framework in place to achieve this goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To ensure the family embraces this framework and is committed to the discipleship process.
Home leadership training is an integral part of the discipleship structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To implement an effective home leadership program, including the fatherhood program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To train the husband and wife in home leadership. ▪ To train the father in biblical fatherhood.
Church and family partnership is strong and effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To ensure clarity and effective functioning of the roles of the church and the home in family discipleship. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To train church members to function effectively as equippers of the family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To involve the parents in actively taking responsibility as the primary faith-shapers of their children.
Adequate resources are allocated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To raise a team of leaders to implement the family discipleship plan, adequately supported with the needed resources. 	
Church programing is harmonized with the family discipleship process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To secure commitment of the church to work with the families closely to ensure that the process runs smoothly. 	
Prayer and intercession for families are a major focus of the church.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To teach on the theology of family spiritual warfare. ▪ To develop the heart for prayerfulness for the family in the church and in the home. 	

Measurement of Success	Critical Success Factor	
	The Church Leadership & Congregation	The Family
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish the corporate emphasis (practices) on praying for the families as a way of life with a proper structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish an appropriate structure in the home for prayer emphasis. To equip the parents to develop the culture of prayerfulness in the home.
The family is actively reaching out to the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To design an equipping track for the families to play an active role in the outreach plan of the corporate church. To train the family in this outreach plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To disciple the family to respond appropriately to the missional call upon them.

b. Culture Shifts

The family-friendly culture does not come naturally. It has to be developed.

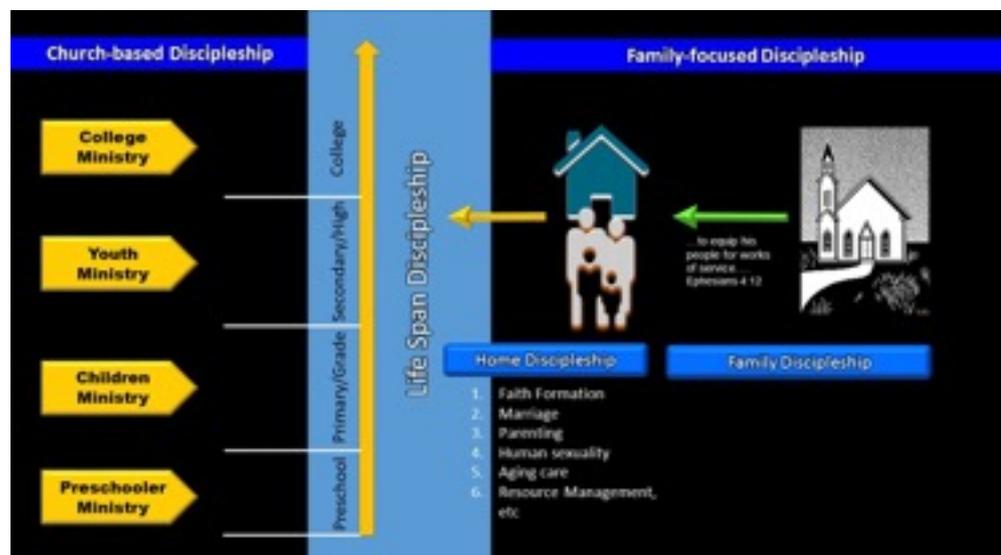
Family ministry development is about cultivating the cultures of the church and the family involving the three stakeholders mentioned above.

The process that brings this about requires one to invest in the following areas of the cultures.

1. Heart shift. Understanding and conviction by both the church and the family in the call of God to disciple the home.
2. Action shift. Formulation of effective strategies, goals, objectives, and plans to cultivate the family-friendly culture.

1) Discipleship Cultures

a) The Discipleship Environment



The church environment we are seeking to establish is as follows.

- ◆ The home partnerships with an overarching plan to the various “silo” ministries in discipling its members.
- ◆ The church equips the home to achieve the above.

b) The Cultures

Our overall goal is to develop a culture within the corporate church discipleship structure to be equipped for training parents in making disciples at home.

There are two types of disciple-making culture we are aiming to cultivate.

1. Home discipleship culture. This refers to all that is done among the family members in discipleship, such as discipleships between husband and wife, parent and children, grandparent and grandchildren, etc.
2. Family discipleship culture. This is about the church discipling the family members in the building blocks of a healthy home.

The family needs training to live a godly life. Families do not automatically become spiritual entities which passionately pursue God Almighty and thus become effective in faith formation of the next generation. Someone has to systemize and orchestrate the activities.

Each family must be intentionally and systematically developed to carry out the tasks. Their capacity for such development is affected by the state of marital relationships, parent-child relationships, human sexuality, aged care, family resource management, etc. Families need to be developed with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in these areas.

The family definitely needs the church to equip them. No single family on their own is in the position to effectively equip themselves for meeting needs at various life stages of the entire life span. The church, as a community that consists of members at various life stages with various gifts and talents, is in a much better position to do so.

2) The Family Ministry Development Framework

The family ministry that is building healthy families requires a framework that is holistic and effective in developing all key building blocks in building such families, such as faith formation, marriage, parenting, human sexuality, aging, non-nuclear living, and resource management systematically over various life stages.

a) The Process

The cultural changes we are seeking to make in the leadership, congregation, and the home for developing the family-friendly culture are not trivial, but major in nature.

A key perspective we need to embrace in our commitment to lead the church through these changes is that it takes a well-thought-out “process” to take the stakeholders from where they are to where they should be (the goals outlined above). This process would involve much time (it will likely take many years) and resources to succeed.

The church needs the support of such a change management process that is effective in developing the culture for building healthy families.

The principles and practices in the change management discipline are relevant in our endeavor. Therefore, we should incorporate these in planning the process of the intended church and home culture changes.

b) Process Phases

The change process consists of three phases.

1. Preparing for culture shifts within the church (leadership and congregation) and the home.
2. Making the actual cultural shifts.
3. Establishing the new family and church cultures.

c) Shift Preparations

This part of the change process covers the following.

Steps	Church Leadership
1. Formation of Family Discipleship Team (FDT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seeking permission from church leadership for this formation.
2. Preparation of FDT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FDT takes steps to understand and gain conviction on the “whys” of building family discipleship culture in the church ▪ FDT studies the Family Development Framework. ▪ FDT takes time to seek God and formulate a broad plan forward.
3. Approval from church leadership of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FDT presents the plan to the church leadership and asks to hear their views. ▪ FDT gets approval for the plan.
4. Research on family discipleship needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FDT to conduct literature and other researches, and surveys (questionnaire and interviews) to understand the needs. ▪ FDT prepares a report on the survey findings. ▪ FDT also assess the “Church Type” and “Change Readiness” of the church for family ministry.
5. FDT team building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FDT takes the opportunity to recruit more members for the team. ▪ Further recruitments will take place over time when the scope of the ministry expands.
6. Formulations of purpose, vision, and core values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FDT completes these and presents them to the leadership team.
7. Formulation of strategies, goals, objectives, and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FDT completes these and presents them to the leadership team for approval.
8. Resource preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FDT designs the family ministry development framework specific to the church. ▪ FDT prepares the resources needed for the implementation of the plan.
9. Training of ministry personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FDT coordinates the training of persons involved in the plan.

d) Change Implementation

This is when the plans are systematically implemented.

The leadership uses various approaches to cast the vision to the whole church.

FDT works with the church leadership in carrying this out.

e) Culture Change Sustainability

The main goal of this phase of the cultural change process is to ensure that all progressive changes in the cultures will remain permanent.

Appropriate actions are taken to achieve this.