



# Ministry with Today's Children & Families

Dale Hudson

**T**he postmodern family is a reflection of the postmodern culture as a whole. To understand the roots of the postmodern culture, you must go to its predecessor—modernism. Modernism developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the wake of modern industrial societies and the rapid growth of cities. With the emerging fully industrialized world, modernism felt religious faith was outdated and that mankind could obtain a higher way of living through science, reason, and logic. It rejected the idea of a compassionate, all-powerful Creator and declared that science is the only way truth can be verified.

The failings of modernism were made apparent by two World Wars, the Holocaust, and Vietnam. People begin to question the results of reason and science with its cold technology, pollution, weapons of mass destruction, and intrusive “control.”

After World War II, a desire to be free from any kind of intellectual demand or moral restraint led to the birth of postmodernism. Idealism, pluralism, relativism, and skepticism became the approach to knowledge and understanding.

From the 1980's to the present, postmodernism has accelerated. It claims there is no absolute truth. No one view is uniquely correct. Truth is not found in absolutes but is created in each person's mind. Everything is in the eye of the beholder and any claim of “fact” is the mere disillusionment of a preconceived bias.

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Postmodern culture's mantra is tolerance and being nonjudgmental. It distains religious authority. There is no fixed moral code. Everyone does what is right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). Whatever works for each person.

The postmodern culture has critical implications for your ministry as you seek to minister to families. We live in a day of unparalleled challenges and opportunities. Family is rapidly being restructured and we must know how to navigate through these changes.

I Chronicles 12:32 highlights the leadership of 200 of Israel's finest leaders: "From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All of these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take."

These leaders understood public affairs, the temper of the nation, and the tendencies of their culture. This helped them know the best course of action to take.

Just as a missionary takes time to study and learn about the culture he is trying to reach, so we must understand the characteristics and tendencies of the culture God has called us to.

Let's explore four key areas of effective family ministry in a postmodern world. It begins by understanding postmodern families.

## Understanding Postmodern Families

The "modern" family consisted of a male breadwinner, female homemaker and children. The postmodern family is much more diverse.

The families portrayed on television provide us with a snapshot of the changes in postmodern family dynamics.

*Leave it to Beaver* embodied the family structure of the 1950's. It was a nuclear family where two parents; a man and a woman, raised their biological children, usually two of

them. The father, Ward, was the breadwinner in the Cleaver family. He was in charge of the household and held an important role as a parenting figure. June, the mother, was a homemaker who stayed at home and did the regular activities of a housewife; she cleaned and cooked.



**Leave it to Beaver (1950s)**

Wally and Beaver (Theodore) portrayed the two children. The first one, Wally was the teenager in the family. He represented a well-rounded, American boy who got good grades, got along with his teachers, and played sports. Beaver, was the seven year-old who enjoyed playing with his friends, reading comic books, and attending church. Though he got into minor trouble, it was usually easily resolved.

Fast forward to present day. *Modern Family*, seen on ABC, depicts three families from today's culture. First you have the typical family with a wife and husband with their three kids. Though Phil, the husband, is the primary breadwinner, Claire, the wife, is seen as the head of the household.

Next, you have a divorced man, Jay, who is remarried to a younger woman named Gloria. Gloria is also the mother of Manny, a young boy, who Jay takes under his wing as his own

child even though he is not the biological father. Once again, Jay, the male, is the primary breadwinner, but by no means is he the head of the household when it comes to the family.

The last family structure we see in *Modern Family* consists of two gay men and an adopted child. Mitchell, the more masculine of the two, works outside of the home and provides for the family while Cam stays home and cares for Lily, their daughter.



### Modern Family on ABC (present day)

Let's delve deeper into the postmodern worldview and landscape of family.

#### Family Structure

- 34% of people say a growing variety of family arrangements is a good thing; 29% say it is a bad thing and 32% say it makes little or no difference.
- 86% say a single parent and child constitute a family.
- 80% say an unmarried couple living together with a child is a family.
- 63% say a gay or lesbian couple raising a child is a family.

#### Marriage

- In 1960, nearly 70% of adults were married compared to only 50% now.

- In 1960, 68% of all twenty-somethings were married. Today just 26% are.
- Americans are waiting about five years longer to marry than they did in 1970.
- College graduates are now far more likely to marry (64%) than those with no higher education (48%).
- Marriage is no longer considered a prerequisite for parenthood. Over the past 50 years, the number of children born to unwed mothers has risen from 5% to 41%.
- In 1960, 87% of children lived with two married parents compared to only 64% today.

#### Children

- 34% of 18 to 29 year olds already have children.
- There were more babies born in 2007 than at the height of the baby boom.
- 39% of households headed by young postmodern parents have children under 18 in the home.

#### Cohabitation

- In 1981, an ABC News/Washington Post poll revealed that 45% of people disapproved of couples living together unmarried. By 2007, a similar question in a Gallup/USA Today poll revealed the disapproval rate had dropped to 27%.
- Cohabitation has soared 17-fold from 430,000 in 1960 to 7.5 million last year.
- Today's children are much more likely to spend time in a cohabiting household than they are to see their parents divorce.
- 24% of children are born to cohabiting couples, which means that more children are currently born to cohabiting couples than to single mothers.
- Another 20% of children will spend time in a cohabiting household with an unrelated adult at some point in their childhood.

- This means that over 40% of children are exposed to a cohabiting relationship.
- Taxpayers are spending a trillion dollars a year to subsidize non-marriage—75 percent federal and 25 percent by states.

### Single Parents

- There are approximately 13.7 million single parents in the United States today, and those parents are responsible for raising 21.8 million children (approximately 26% of children under 21).
- 84% of single parents are mothers.
- The poverty rate among single mothers with less than a high school diploma is over 45%.

### Pre-Marital Sex

- In 1969, 68% of the public believed pre-marital sex was wrong. By 1985, only 39% believed it was wrong. In 2009, a CBS/New York Times poll revealed only 32% believed it was wrong.

### Divorce

- America's divorce rate began climbing in the late 1960's and skyrocketed in the '70's and early '80's. The rate peaked at 5.3 divorces per 1,000 people in 1981. It has since dropped to 3.6 and is at the lowest rate since 1970. Many experts say the rate is primarily down because of couples cohabitating without marrying.
- 55% of divorced couples share custody of their children.

### Family Roles

- 71% of mothers with children under 18 are in the labor force. In 1975, fewer than half of all mothers were working outside the home. Even among mothers of children under 3, 61% are in

the labor force compared to 34% in 1975.

- When asked in 2009 whether they agreed or disagreed that women should return to their traditional roles in society, only 19% of adults agreed while 75% disagreed.
- In 1960, women comprised only 33% of the workforce. By 2009, women made up 47% of the workforce.
- There are an estimated 154,000 stay-at-home dads who care for 287,000 children.
- 62% of people endorse the modern marriage in which both the husband and wife both work and both take care of the household and children. This is up from 47% in 1977.

### Same Sex Marriage

- 53% of adults younger than 30 favor allowing same sex marriage.
- 48% of adults ages 30 to 45 favor allowing same sex marriage.
- 38% of adults ages 46 to 64 favor allowing same sex marriage.
- 29% of adults ages 65 and older favor allowing same sex marriage.

### Multi-Generational Households

- According to Census Bureau, the number of Americans living in multi-generational households has shot up, increasing to 4.9 million, or 10.5%.
- This includes grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Over 2.9 children are being raised with their grandparents as their primary caregiver.
- The primary reason for this increase is due to the economic downturn. The unemployed are much more likely to live in multi-generational households. It is natural that more people would reach out to family for financial support.



## Religious Beliefs

- 70% believe there is more than one way to God.
- 64% believe God is real.
- 55% believe evolution is the best explanation of how we got here.
- Only 28% believe the Bible is God's Word.
- 25% are not affiliated with any religion.

## Technology

- One defining characteristic of young postmodern families is technology. They grew up totally tech connected.
- 88% use texting.
- 90% use the internet.
- 75% have a profile on a social network.
- 25% have a video of themselves online.

These findings provide us with insight into the culture we are ministering to. Let's translate this into practical ways we can reach postmodern families for Christ.

## Reaching Postmodern Families

It is easy to get bogged down and even discouraged by these statistics. But the good news is postmodern families are searching for the truth. They are looking for something to fill the empty void in their lives that only God can satisfy. God is at work. Churches and ministries that are reaching out to today's families with wisdom and love are seeing God change their hearts and lives—one family at a time. Here are some things churches can do to reach postmodern families.

- ✓ **Embrace Racial Diversity**  
Postmodern families are the most racially diverse in American history, yet Sunday morning remains one of the most segregated hours of the week. Churches must be intentional about making everyone in their community feel welcome

and loved. This includes reflecting racial diversity in communication pieces, staffing, and cultural awareness.

- ✓ **Focus on urban and suburban communities.**  
Only 14% of young postmodern parents live in rural areas compared to 29% of Boomers and 36% of the Silent Generation. Yes, we need churches in rural areas, but if we are going to reach the young postmodern family, we must go where they are. Churches must be planted in urban and suburban communities.
- ✓ **Make a good first impression on new families.**  
The first impression is a lasting impression. And you only get one opportunity to make it. If families don't have a good experience on their first visit to your church, they probably won't come back, no matter how much you "follow up" with them. Take these steps to exceed their expectations on their first visit.
- ✓ **Have a separate check-in area for guests.**  
Even though people are used to having to wait in line, they hate it. Exceed their expectations by taking them out of the normal check-in line and give them an "express line" experience
- ✓ **Give guests a gift.**  
They expect to get brochures and "information." Exceed their expectations and give them a gift. Want to really exceed their expectations? Instead of giving them a "church-related gift" like a CD of the sermon, give them a gift that is non-church related like a Starbuck's gift card.
- ✓ **Walk them to their child's classroom.**  
They are used to being pointed in the general direction. Exceed their

expectations and “walk” them to the classroom.

✓ **Walk the parents to the adult service.**

Don't just stop at walking them to their child's classroom. Take the next step and then walk the parents to the adult service.

✓ **Show genuine interest in them.**

Good children's ministries are polite. Exceptional children's ministries are personable. Move beyond the “hello” at the door and take time to talk with them and get to know them.

✓ **Bend the guidelines to accommodate them.**

Many times guests will ask for special accommodations such as allowing two siblings of different ages to be in the same classroom. Unless their request violates your safety and security procedures, do your best to accommodate them. Look for ways to say “yes” instead of saying “no.”

✓ **Remember their name and use it.**

It makes an impression on people when you immediately remember their name. Work on techniques that help you memorize people's names instantly.

✓ **Help them after the worship service.**

Most guests aren't expecting you to go the second mile and help them after the service. Exceed their expectations by being there to help them check out their children, answer questions, thank them for coming, etc.

✓ **Make the safety and security of children a top priority.**

Postmodern parents have been psychologically impacted by 9/11, terrorism, and buildings being bombed. They live with a sense of danger in the world. They

have intercoms and security cameras in their child's rooms. We must make the safety and security of their children a top priority while they are in our care. Here are some key steps to take to gain the confidence and trust of parents.

- *Have secure buildings and proper plans and systems in place such as a secure check-in/check-out system. Parents must know that no one else can pick up their child.*
- *Let parents know every volunteer has been through an orientation process, which includes a background check and screening. Put it in writing and regularly remind parents. Knowing there are only approved volunteers in the room will help build trust.*
- *Have a rule that no adult is ever alone with a child and let parents know this.*
- *Issue pagers or use numbers on screen to notify parents when they are needed. This will give parents a sense of security and will help them feel more comfortable entrusting their child with you.*
- *Fill out incident reports. Kids are going to fall down, they are going to get bumps, scratches from other children, etc. Hardly a week goes by without it happening. The key is how you respond and communicate with parents. Have incident reports. Anytime there is an accident, bump, scratch, etc. fill out an incident report. Write down exactly what happened. When the parents come to pick up their child, share the incident report with them and have them sign it. This will build trust. Trust is depleted if they go home and discover a bump or scratch and were not told about it.*

✓ **Be committed to a ministry of excellence.**

Postmodern parents have high expectations of institutions and authorities. Our “competition” is not the church down the street. It’s Disney, Target, or the last business or restaurant they interacted with. We must pay fantastic attention to detail. Excellence is doing the small details well.

This includes keeping children’s rooms clean. When postmodern parents look inside your classroom, they assess its cleanliness. If it’s untidy, cluttered, or dirty, it is difficult to gain their trust. Keep toys clean and disinfected, throw away or repair damaged furniture, keep the floor vacuumed, and the trash emptied.

Another important detail is following proper adult-to-child ratios. A room that is too crowded or understaffed will damage your credibility with parents.

✓ **Foster relationships and create community.**

Postmoderns are highly relational. They prefer circles instead of rows. The larger your ministry becomes, the smaller it must become. Small groups are a vital part of this process. How this is accomplished will vary from church to church. The key is creating environments where relationships are built and people are known and cared for.

## Ministry with Postmodern Families

The church is called to be a hospital for the spiritually sick, not a museum where perfect Christians are on display. People come into a hospital bleeding, coughing, and hurting. It is messy—very messy.

And that’s right where Jesus wants us. He was called the “Friend of Sinners.” He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

We must draw people to the truth while not driving them away from it. If we are reaching our community, we will have people attending our church whose lives do not line up with God’s best plan for the family.

Our calling must be to lovingly share the truth with them and then provide pathways for them to move toward it. If we are going to tell people where they should be, then we must provide the steps they can take to get there.

✓ **Interview people before you allow them to teach children.**

✓ **Increase the number of men involved in ministry with children.**

The ever-increasing percentage of children being raised by a single parent can affect the child’s balance of male-female influence growing up. This is especially true with boys. We must bring godly male figures into their lives. Things like a men’s mentoring program or having men lead boy’s small groups makes a big difference.

✓ **Offer support, encouragement, and counseling for children affected by divorce.**

Many children are affected by divorce. I counsel with many families whose children are angry, upset, and acting out at school because of their parent’s divorce. We must be there to offer support, encouragement, and counseling. Programs like “Divorce Recovery For Kids” can help children cope with the pain of divorce.

✓ **Equip couples we marry.**

We must do a better job up front of equipping couples we marry. Churches marry 86% of Americans, but I am afraid we fail them many times. Protestant

divorce rates are actually higher than the unchurched. We must focus on pre-marital counseling at a new level. We must provide the skills they need for success going into the marriage.

✓ **Provide hope and strategies for couples that are having trouble.**

Recent research reports that about 60 percent of divorces are by couples that are no more unhappy than those who remain married and have “low levels of conflict.” Over 2,500 couples were surveyed and found that 40% of those well into the divorce process, say that “one or both of them are interested in the possibility of reconciliation.”

A “Second Chances Act” has been proposed that would set a one-year “cooling off” period before a divorce can become final. It would also encourage spouses to send their mates an “early notification and divorce prevention letter,” warning that a divorce was likely if problems were not resolved. The proposal would also require parents of minor children to attend divorce education classes before they can file for divorce. This would allow churches more time and opportunities to provide help with counseling and reconciliation.

✓ **Provide special attention to cohabitating couples.**

Cohabitation is rapidly on the rise. If we are going to disciple cohabitating couples we must:

- *Be about redemption.* We must be a place where people can discover God’s grace and forgiveness.
- *Speak the truth in love.* There has to be a balance between love and truth. It’s like the two wings of a plane. One won’t fly without the other. Communicate God’s truth about

marriage with a heart of love and compassion. When people know you truly care for them, it will open their heart to receive the truth.

- *Establish guidelines.* It is important to have clear guidelines in areas that are related to cohabiting. Will you allow parents who are cohabiting to serve in children’s ministry? Will you allow parents who are cohabiting to participate in child dedication? These are questions that each church must address and answer for themselves. The biblical reasons behind your guidelines should be clearly communicated.
- *Have pathways in place.* As stated earlier, when you challenge parents to line up with God’s Word, it’s important to have pathways in place that will help them get there. When you explain “why” be ready to show them “how.” Provide them next steps such as a prep-for-marriage course or counseling.
- *Work hand-in-hand with adult ministries.* Partner with adult ministries to create the pathways mentioned above. Many times, the first time parents will share they are cohabiting will come through their interaction with children’s ministry. Being able to easily connect them with adult ministries is vital.

When you minister to parents who are cohabiting, it can be difficult at times. I regularly meet cohabiting couples that attend our church. I am praying it will be the beginning of a journey of them discovering God’s plan for the family. Our job is not to call them “out” but to call them “up.” Some will pull away when they hear the truth, but others will follow God’s Word and you will see their lives and



family changed forever. I've seen both happen, and had the joy of seeing parents who were cohabiting get married. Just remember, we can't change anyone's heart. Only God can do that. It's simply our job to speak God's truth in love.

## Partnering with Postmodern Families

The most important factor in a child's spiritual life is his or her parents. No one has more influence. The time a child will spend in children's ministry is a small fraction compared to the time the child will spend with his or her parents.

We must spend as much time focusing on parents as we do children. We have to shift much of our time, energy, and resources toward partnering with adult ministries, toward discipling parents, toward equipping parents to lead their children spiritually, toward helping parents have strong marriages.

If we want to see children's lives changed, then we have to see their parents' lives and marriages changed. ***We don't need more children's ministry. We need more marriage and parent ministry.*** What happens at home is just as important, if not more important, than what happens at church.

The good news is that studies show that young postmodern parents are more focused on their family than their Boomer parents were. A defining characteristic is involvement in their children's lives. They are home more with their children. Consider this. . .

- 76% say they have no interest in gaining their manager's position. Much of this mindset comes from seeing their older bosses spend long hours at the office to the neglect of their families and personal lives. They would rather pass on the promotion that involves longer hours and instead go

home to be with their kids. They have memories from their own childhood of lonely afternoons and early evenings because their parents were working long hours. They want to be there for their children.

- Ironically, they are working more hours than their parents, but the big difference is they are working smarter. Technology is allowing them the ability to work from home a lot more. A recent study shows there has been a 61% increase in people working from home since 2005. This gives them flexibility in their schedule and the ability to spend more time with their family at home.
- 52% say that being a good parent is one of the most important things in life.

The church has a great opportunity to partner with postmodern parents. They want to take the lead in discipling their children. If we place the proper tools in their hands, they will step up to the plate spiritually for their children. Let's look at some effective ways to do this.

### ✓ Provide parents with easy-to-use discipleship resources and tools.

Many parents feel like they can't effectively disciple their children unless they are a Bible scholar. Encourage parents by providing them simple, user-friendly resources.

### ✓ Don't program them to death.

Don't add too much to their already crazy, busy schedules and then guilt them for not being there. Families make choices with their time. If you are constantly expecting them to be at the church for extra programs or events, they can become disheartened and overwhelmed. Be strategic in what you do. Work with the

other ministries in the church when planning your calendar.

✓ **Strategically look at family calendars when planning your church calendar.**

Take into consideration holidays, days school is out, 3-day weekends, spring breaks, graduation dates, etc. when planning. Make sure you place key events, classes, etc. at times when it won't be competing with other family events.

✓ **Partner with other ministries.**

Become best friends with student ministry, adult ministry, senior adult's ministry, women's ministry, and men's ministry. Work closely with them and together create a strategy to influence families. Here's an example. We sat down with adult ministries and shared with them the child dedication class dates for next year. They purposely created parenting and marriage classes that will roll out of the child dedication class dates.

✓ **Set up key family milestones you celebrate with them.**

There are key times in a family's life when they swing the doors wide open and invite you to bring influence into their home. Set up classes and celebrations for milestones like child dedication, baptism, pre-teen passage, high school graduation, etc.

✓ **Be just as intentional about building relationships with parents as you are with children.**

Spend intentional time talking with parents, going to adult ministry activities, attending adult worship, etc. When you build relationships with parents, you open their hearts to receive your influence.

✓ **Find out their needs as a family.**

What are they struggling with? What challenges are they dealing with as

parents? What is their home life like? How can you best minister to them? This is done through the step above as you build relationships with families and spend time listening to them. You can also host a parent focus group a few times a year and intentionally ask these type of questions.

✓ **Provide activities and events for families to enjoy together.**

Postmodern families emphasize family activities above material things. Provide shared learning experiences, family picnics, family activity nights, family worship nights, family camps, family concerts, family fall festivals—all great ways to get families together so you can speak into their lives.

✓ **Be prepared to minister to families when they are going through difficult times.**

God wants to work through you to influence families when they are at the hospital, when they are seeking counseling, when they are mourning at the funeral home, when they are in financial crisis.

✓ **Involve grandparents.**

Postmodern parents are in much closer contact with their parents than previous generations. In many families, grandparents are closely attached to helping raise the grandkids. In fact, 25% of young parents have their child's grandparents involved in the child's activities. There are also 5.8 million grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

✓ **Get them involved in serving in children's ministry at church.**

They want to see their children succeed and grow spiritually. They are willing to volunteer in their children's activities.

✓ **Provide opportunities for families to serve together.**

Families can be greeters together. Families can go on mission trips together. Families can participate in community service projects together. Last year we hosted a family yard sale. Each family brought items from home and set up a table in the church parking lot. They raised over \$1,300 that went toward stopping human trafficking. At Thanksgiving, we prepare meals for the needy in our community. It is wonderful seeing families participating in this together.

✓ **Know how to effectively communicate with them.**

Here are some factors to consider as you communicate with young postmodern parents.

- *They are bombarded with information.* The average adult is flooded with over 247 messages a day. With this influx of messages, it is a challenge to get your message through the clutter and into their hands.
- *They have very short attention spans.* The attention span may be an endangered species in the lightning-fast, multimedia society we've become. With media overload continuing to amp up, the ability to grab people's attention and hold it is an increasing challenge.

New research finds that the average political sound bite—defined as any footage of a candidate speaking uninterrupted—has dropped to just eight seconds. (About the time it took to you read that last sentence.) To give that information some context, consider that, during the 1968 presidential election, the average sound bite was a full 43 seconds. And as recently as the 1990s, CBS said it

wouldn't broadcast any sound bite under 30 seconds in an effort to better promote informed, complex discourse. Two decades later, candidates get out about a third of that before cutting them off.

According to the *Pediatrics* medical journal, increased exposure to television and video games causes noticeable decreases in attention spans in children. One study says the average attention span of university students is 10 minutes.

There are three words you will be hearing more often: "It's Too Long." The video—it's too long. The lesson—it's too long. The announcement—it's too long. The brochure—it's too long. The email—it's too long. The advertisement—it's too long.

This means when you are communicating with young parents you must *say it short*. Complexity is your enemy. If you want parents to remember something long term, then make it a simple statement. Great communicators know how to take complex truths and teach them in simple statements.

The fewer the words, the bigger the impact. Here's an example. Finish this sentence. The Few, the Proud, the \_\_\_\_\_. The reason you were able to finish the sentence is because it is in your long-term memory. It is in your long-term memory because it's six words. If it were 60 words, you probably wouldn't remember it.

Also remember to *show it short*. Keep your training and teaching videos at 2-3 minutes max.

And don't forget to *write it short*. Print pieces should be short and to the point. That long, wordy brochure you created, no one is reading it. Cut out most of the words and use pictures with simple, short statements.

- *They want immediate response.* With mobile devices, text, twitter, and email they are used to getting a quick response. Respond to them within 24 hours.
- *Communicate with them through text.* Did you know that 98% of text messages get read? Every Tuesday, we send out a short text with questions from the weekend lesson that parents can discuss with their child at home. Parents can sign up to receive the text. We've had great response. There are many text services available that enable you to do this. We currently use [www.txtsignal.com](http://www.txtsignal.com).

✓ **Provide them with parental advice.**

Postmodern parents are very open to parental advice. Online parenting information has exploded online. Alltop.com contains links to hundreds of blogs and content sites under its "mom's" section. It features perspectives from all manner of moms: single and married.

Facebook has also become a place to share parenting advice. Young parents live on Facebook and this contributes to parenting becoming an increasingly public, not private, experience. Respond by creating online parenting support such as a Facebook page or website. Offer parenting classes at church.

## Conclusion

When we reach and disciple a family we make an impact for generations to come. My family is a personal example of this. There was a

time when we knew nothing about God. My great grandfather was an alcoholic and murderer who was sent to prison for life. My grandfather followed in his footsteps with heavy drinking and constant fighting. We had never been inside the doors of a church.

One day, a man in our neighborhood felt burdened for our family. He came and invited us to church. My grandfather cursed him out and told him to leave. But he wouldn't give up. He kept coming back and asking us to come. Finally my grandmother and my father went to church with him. My father sat in church as a 9-year-old boy for the first time. He heard that Jesus loved him and could make a difference in our family.

Soon my grandmother became a follower of Christ as well as my father. After several years of praying, my grandfather also became a follower of Christ and his life was changed. He became a church deacon for over 33 years until he passed away. There are now three pastors in our family as a result of God's impacting grace.

You are surrounded by families just like ours. Families looking for answers, families torn apart that need healing, families that desperately need to experience God's grace. Let's be committed to understanding postmodern families—reaching postmodern families, discipling postmodern families, and partnering with postmodern families.



# The Future of Children's Ministry

Dale Hudson

From: *The Future of Children's Ministry*

A KidMin360 Collaborative Children's Ministry Resource

Created by Greg Baird, KidMin360 (<http://kidmin360.com>)

## 1. The future of children's ministry will be tied to the future of "pop" (popular) culture.

That statement may make your temperature rise a little...but it's the truth. Many of our current practices are direct reflections of the culture in which we live.

Someone asked the president of MTV how they keep up with the culture. His response, "We create the culture." Take a look at your music, imagery, teaching methods, and communication. If it's being successful. . . it's probably synced up with the current pop culture.

I know what some of you are thinking...we must stand against the culture if we're going to change the world. Let me ask you a question. How is it going? Pretty simple answer. . . not too well. You know why? It's going to have to be an inside job.

If we are going to influence the culture and change the world, we must pray God will open doors for children who love Him to become actors, singers, sports stars, writers, and producers. An example is Bailee Madison who is a rising child star in Hollywood. She's not only a star...she's a shining light for Jesus.

I have a close friend who is a producer for Disney and Universal. He trains and places children in key film, television, and musical roles. He is making a spiritual investment in the children who will influence the future.

One of the kids that was in my children's ministry years ago now plays in the NFL. He now has a huge platform to share His faith. We must make these type investments and ask God to raise these children up into roles where they can truly influence the culture from the inside out.

## 2. The future of children's ministry will become increasingly diverse ethnically and culturally.

Most of the population growth in the U.S. will come from immigrants already in the U.S. or those who will migrate to the U.S. No majority ethnicities will exist by 2050 in the United States. Children's ministries will reflect the wonderful diversity of the body of Christ.

## 3. The future of children's ministry will reside more and more in urban areas.

By 2050, 90 percent of Americans will live in urban areas. We must invest our time and energies where the majority of children will be living.

## 4. The future of children's ministry will be multi-site.

The multi-site church revolution continues to grow rapidly. . . taking children's ministry right along with it.

**5. The future of children’s ministry will show sporadic attendance patterns**

As I talk with churches across the country, the norm is for families to attend church once every two or even three weeks. As the pace of life continues to race ahead, families will continue to make time choices.

**6. The future of children’s ministry will see continued emphasis on family ministry.**

Family ministry will not only be focused on partnering with parents to disciple their children, but also discipling parents as part of the process. We will have the opportunity to disciple parents who have very little Bible knowledge or Bible background. They will learn together with their children that Noah’s Ark isn’t just about the movie “Evan Almighty.”

**7. The future of children’s ministry will involve online children’s ministries.**

As churches continue to expand their online worship services and discipleship tools, they will develop these same online opportunities for children as well.

**8. The future of children’s ministry will see us moving from the printed Word to the digital Word.**

Just look at the numbers. In 2009 there were about two billion physical books sold in the United States. Sounds like a lot, but that’s down nearly five percent from 2008. This year that number is expected to drop another two percent. But e-books? Sales will go from about \$150 million last year to an estimated billion-dollar business by 2012, as new products from tech companies like Apple flood the market. Kids will bring their Bible to church, but it will be in a digital format. The Bible is just as much God’s Word on an iPhone as it is on a printed page.

**9. The future of children’s ministry will move toward mobile work.**

Children’s Pastors and Directors will be given much more flexibility to get out of the office and work from home or even on the go because of the rapid expansion of mobile work technology. You will see less and less desktop computers and more and more mobile work devices such as laptops and iPads.

**10. The future of children’s ministry will move from passive learning to active learning.**

The days of one-way information download will give way to collaborative, hands on, interactive learning. Children’s ministries will realize that children who play interactive video games, learn at school by using new interfacing technology, and help determine outcomes through texting, learn best by participation instead of passivity

**11. The future of children’s ministry will be ministering to a wide variety of family units.**

Single parents, blended families, and grandparents raising their grandchildren will continue to rise. Ministering to children whose parents are living together unmarried will also continue to increase.

**12. The future of children’s ministry will be affected by the next big issue that churches must face.**

The issue used to be divorce, but now it is whether or not homosexuality is an approved lifestyle for a Christ Follower. The decisions that parents, pastors, and church leaders make about this will affect the beliefs of children in the future.



**13. The future of children’s ministry will be an increasing culture of pluralism.**

Churches will have to intentionally teach children that Jesus is the only way to God and eternal life. But they must also be taught to be respectful to others as they stand for the truth. They must be taught to speak the truth in love.

**14. The future of children’s ministry will involve connecting with, communicating with, and training volunteers through technology.**

Online training, YouTube and Vimeo videos, Twitter, Skype, and Facebook are just the beginning of tech tools that will be used to accomplish this. These tools will replace much of the “come to church and sit in a room” style training. As technology continues to rapidly progress, so will the ability to use it for these purposes.

**15. The future of children’s ministry will involve more variety in teaching.**

Media saturated children will push back against the flood of video curriculum that

they are being exposed to week after week. Video elements will still be used, but entire lessons taught by video will be replaced more often by a live teacher.

**16. The future of children’s ministry will be anchored in relationships if it is going to thrive.**

Kid-friendly buildings, cool music, and funny videos will not keep kids coming. Relationships will continue to be the key. Every child wants to be known individually and cared for by a caring leader. The children’s ministries that make an impact will keep relational connections at the top of their priority list.

Our ministry canoe is not resting in a stagnant pond. Instead it is being carried down an every-changing river. The future is just around the river bend.

We must ask God to give us the wisdom, insight, and courage to make changes—very quick changes at times—to successfully navigate the future of children’s ministry.

**“The Future of Children’s Ministry” from KidMin360**  
Download a free copy from <http://kidmin360.com>



The  
**FUTURE**  
of  
**CHILDREN'S**  
**MINISTRY**

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