



Is There Hope for Our Children?

By Steve Stephens and Tom Dressel

Children are the future of the church as well as our country. We desperately need them to grow into citizens who proclaim their life in Christ, who are keepers of the covenant of marriage, and who pass on a healthy, godly heritage to their children. Is your church willing to take a stand and turn the tide?

When is the last time you evaluated your congregation for the style of family life your children and youth have?

- What proportion of them are living with their biological parents?
- What's the percentage that come from homes of divorce? From cohabiting couples? From mothers who never married?

Have you considered the correlation of their behavior, mental health, and spiritual growth with the family life they are experiencing?

The article [Children Are Hurt by Marriage Failure](#) by Mike McManus, president of Marriage Savers, offers a bleak picture of the state of our children's health.

Consider the impact of **schools** where our children will spend many of their waking hours. Where prayer is judged harmful and has been judicially removed. School health officials condone the killing of "mistakes" youth conceive. Teachers cannot share healthy moral values without the threat of losing their jobs.

Governmental programs designed to build healthy families have failed miserably. Our welfare system offers a disincentive for biological parents to raise their children together. Early childhood programs discourage participation with children during their formative years.

Church programs often split families from worshipping together as parents and their offspring attend their special groups and ministries. Preaching is often intellectual without application to developing healthy relationships. There is emphasis on women's groups, youth groups, and sometimes men's groups. What has happened to family groups?

Parents fail to meet the needs of their children as they seek to meet their own individual needs. Their focus on material gain requires both parents to work outside the home. They become so absorbed in a variety of sports and extracurricular activities that they have no room for quality time to build relationships. Life becomes a whirlwind of hecticness and chaos.

Where can we find help? First of all, our only hope is in God and the plan He has laid out for us in Scripture for our salvation and the conduct of our lives. Who else is better fit to restore the family and its legacy than the community of Christians? This means your church!

Your congregation's pastor is called to the role of shepherd as was Peter admonished by Jesus to care for His sheep. He/she is called to proclaim and model a godly walk. Your pastor, with staff and volunteers, might build a ministry to marriage as outlined in [In the Line of Fire](#) by Ted Lowe and Doug Fields (their book **Married People: How Your Church Can Build Marriage That Last** is also a great resource). Join with pastors from 180 area churches in the [Greater Portland Community Marriage Policy](#)[®] and in the implementation of its minimum standards for marriage within your congregation.

Perhaps we could establish a goal within our individual congregations of zero divorce. This goal might not seem attainable at least in the near future (although there are churches that are having near zero divorce). But remember with God all things are possible! What would be a reasonable goal? If we don't set a goal we won't accomplish much. Someone once said that "Those who aim at nothing usually hit it." Let's do this for our children! Let's do this for our community!