

The Point of Home

A Spiritual Formation Dialogue

Interview of Kurt Bruner by Greg Hatteberg

My wife, Lisa, has struggled with multiple sclerosis since 1984 causing her to be severely disabled. That makes our marriage more difficult and more beautiful than I could have imagined when we first said “I Do” in 1980. I am madly in love with Lisa, and I see her as my highest calling and most meaningful ministry. Still, I was surprised when a flood of emotion hit me over that reality while sitting in a seminary lecture.

It happened during a doctor of ministry Marriage and Family Ministry class. I came into the cohort program expecting an overview of scriptural passages touching family themes, which I received. I expected a summary of family ministry best practices, which I received. But I didn't expect what else occurred: an overwhelming sense of humility, gratitude and awe at the realization that God is using my marriage to form Lisa and me into the image of Jesus Christ: more than every book I've read, sermon I've heard, spiritual retreat I've taken, and lecture I've attended combined.

That realization came while listening to a lecture by DTS adjunct professor Kurt Bruner, a best-selling author of many books including It Starts at Home.

Kurt serves as a Spiritual Formation pastor with Lake Pointe Church near Dallas. He also leads a fast-growing movement of over 350 churches restoring the home as the primary context of spiritual formation. During a recent interview, I asked Kurt some of the questions that have burned within me ever since my first exposure to this unique perspective on spiritual formation.

Since an effective men's ministry must be rooted in a biblical theology of the home, I thought it would be best to include our discussion in this issue of Connection.

GN: You have a different perspective than most writers on spiritual formation. How would you summarize it?

KB: Like others, I see spiritual formation as the process of being conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. Most of the authors I enjoy on this subject focus on what past generations would have called “the contemplative life” oriented toward prayer, reading, solitude and the like. But the vast majority of believers are called to “the active life” of marriage and family. God designed the home as the primary context of our spiritual formation. During a silent retreat I feel closer to Jesus. When



Kurt Bruner



Greg Hatteberg

we often relegate talking about marriage and family to those infrequent occasions when we happen to be teaching from one of the well-known passages on marriage or parenting. I've even heard some say that the Bible doesn't say much about family. In reality, the Bible doesn't say much without family. From Genesis to Revelation, the dominant images the Scripture uses as touchstones for understanding God's

I serve my wife and children in ways that are inconvenient or unpleasant, I am being Jesus. Philippians 2 calls me to embody the incarnation of Christ by humbling myself and "taking on the form of a servant." That often means swallowing my pride to apologize to my wife or giving up a cherished "quiet time" to change a disgusting diaper. I might get a spiritual retreat once every year. I get to serve my family every thirty minutes seven days a week. You can probably guess which is forming me more toward Christ-like humility and self-sacrifice.

relationship to humanity are marriage and parenthood. We can't understand what it means to be human apart from our creation as male and female, two becoming one as a picture of three persons in an eternal communion of love. We don't really grasp why God loves us so much until we become a parent. I can't help loving my children. I would die for them. So would He. Every sermon we preach and lesson we teach from Scripture should reference these realities. Again, a healthy home is the highest expression of God's image on earth.

GH: You also call the home the center of spiritual warfare. Why?

KB: Because the family is the highest expression of God's image on earth. Like the Holy Trinity, it is a communion of loving persons. The apostle Paul described the marital union as a mysterious picture of the gospel itself. Satan hates anything that pictures his mortal enemy. If you've ever been part of a loving, healthy family, you have smelled the sweet aroma of heaven. If you've ever lived in a troubled, broken home, you have breathed the foul stench of hell. The most effective counterattack against our enemy we can launch is to make our own homes what God intended them to be: a little bit of heaven rather than a foretaste of hell.

GH: You believe this understanding is crucial to effectively teaching Scripture?

KB: I do. This is so important for those of us called to preach or teach. Sadly,

GH: Briefly explain how you help pastors make these profound truths practical in the context of a local church.

KB: In 2007 and 2008 my good friend Dr. John Trent and I facilitated a collaborative alliance of about 15 churches that has grown to over 350 of various sizes and traditions. We provide short video training modules and customizable masters that help pastors adopt best practices for creating a culture of intentional families. We have an online coaching service at DriveFaithHome.com that helps leaders learn the philosophy and leverage customizable tools that make it easy for families to become intentional at home.

View highlights from Kurt Bruner's presentation on spiritual formation at home at www.PointOfHome.com