

# The Home Field Advantage

by Robbie Crawford

"When a child is converted into the church, 30 percent of the time, the rest of the family is converted also.

"When a mother is converted into the church, 50 percent of the time, the rest of the family is converted also.

"When a father is converted into the church, 80 percent of the time, the rest of the family is converted also."

(taken from a sermon by Rev. Garry Tracy, June 17, 2001.)



These statistics give us two important pieces of information:

1. There is less likely a chance to win the whole family to God by reaching the child first . . . but there is a chance. In fact, there is a 30 percent chance.

2. The mother has a greater spiritual impact on the home than the child, but the father has the greatest influence. This is vital information to us as soulwinners and teachers because we can focus our energies more effectively.

The child is obviously the easiest person in the family to reach with the gospel, but to increase our chances of keeping the child in the church, we must reach the parents. Overwhelming research has shown us that when a parent is involved in the child's learning, the impact of the learning experience on the child nearly doubles and the changes made are permanent. Research has also shown that the parent is the single most important adult in a child's life. The parent has more influence over a child than any teacher, school, or curriculum.

The greatest gift that we can give a child is to reach his parents with the gospel. With this in mind, we must broaden our vision. We must focus on reaching the families of every child in our Sunday school classroom. If we do not convert the family, the likelihood of our teaching having long-term effects on our children and youth is diminished. The chances that our Sunday school children will be saved and permanently grounded in the church are low. It is not just a good idea to involve the parents in our program; research is compelling us that we must involve them.

Our mission field is the home. If we can reach the home of every child, we have a better chance of seeing the children saved and changed forever.

The Word Aflame curriculum team is developing a program to aid Sunday school teachers in impacting and converting the entire family. The name of the program is "Home Field

Advantage." Through this program teachers will receive training and materials for contacting the unsaved parents/guardians of every child in their class three times a quarter via (1) a letter, (2) a phone call, and (3) a home visit.

The home visits are pre-scheduled by the teachers. They last approximately thirty minutes, and the teacher spends half of the time doing an activity with the parent/s and the child (siblings are also invited to join) that corresponds with the current Sunday school lessons. The teacher tells the parent about the current set of lessons being covered in the child's class and asks the parents for prayer requests. The teacher's most important role during this time is to listen without imposing a lot of advice, opinions, or personal stories. Each session ends in family prayer where the teacher, the child, and the parent/s pray together for that family and any other prayer requests that were mentioned.

Just before the end of the home visit, the teacher leaves a small activity with the supplies for the child to complete before the next Sunday. The child brings the finished activity to Sunday school for a special prize. The teacher lets the family know that they will be in his prayers throughout the week. When our Holy Ghost-filled teachers walk into a home that home will be affected in a positive way. The family will see the love of Christ

demonstrated through a teacher's willingness to spend time caring about them and their child and they will feel the power of God through the life, words, and actions of the teacher. A relationship will be born between the church and the home, which is the most powerful and effective way of reaching a person.

Dedicated teachers are the key to the vision of a revival among our Sunday school children and their families. God has given the United Pentecostal Church International the vision of "One Million Children," and our intentions are not only to reach them, but to keep them.

## The goals of these contacts are:

1. To develop a relationship with the family.
2. To teach the parent/s about what the child is learning in class and about the church and classroom environment so the parent can be comfortable with the teacher and the church.
3. To better understand the child by becoming aware of the child's family, environment, and relationships.
4. To enable the parent/s to understand biblical concepts in order to reinforce and/or teach them at home.
5. To keep the family informed and involved in the church's events.
6. To cover that home and family with prayer.
7. To eventually convert the entire family to the Lord.

