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anymore. Incredibly, as the ship was right-sized and family became the center of spiritual development, many churches began seeing their retention rates climb to 80 and 90%. In other words, focusing on the development of the family is putting into practice a biblical truth that God richly blesses.

How do we help families to be spiritual? Train them. Beth and I began meeting with the teens and their parents in the early 2000s in Chicago. Although there was resistance at first, having the families sit together, learn together, and discuss their family dynamics enabled them to grow closer and overcome obstacles at home. We have continued the practice of a monthly meeting with teens and their parents together since that time in both Johannesburg and San Antonio. In our opinion, this time together is one of the most important events that take place on our calendar. Not only does it provide training for the families, but it also helps to build a village, which I will discuss next. We will be regularly furnishing you with devotionals to do, both with your teens and parents together, and family devotionals for the families to take home.

Three, the youth & family ministry is only as strong as the village: This passage in Acts 2 has always been a fundamental vision of the relationships we desire in our churches. Unity, sacrifice for one another, and sharing life together brought about the fulfillment of Jesus' teaching in John 13:35. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Outsiders flocked to the faith because of the village community of the early church. The Christians' joy radiated as they ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Teen families build community by regularly meeting together. Have fun, laugh together, eat together, celebrate birthdays together, and learn together! The village gives teens multiple "aunties" and "uncles." We will help you to facilitate this community.

And the like: Young Teen/Middle School – We will be releasing Bible studies to address this need and are starting with a series called "Heroes." The Leader's Guide and the first lesson, "Blind Bartimaeus" are included in the February content.

Teen Leader Training – We have incredible full-time ministers and volunteers that serve our families in the youth and family ministry. As they rotate in, it is easy to take for granted that working with teenagers may be entirely new to them. Training empowers and builds teen leader competence.

Teen Quiet Times – We plan to create Quiet Times and devotionals to strengthen your ministry, especially when they are not in school.

We have already posted a page of introductory articles and materials for January for free! When you create a free account at www.GetGroundedForLife.com, you will immediately have access to everything for January, including four teen curriculum lessons, a teen and parent devotional (including teaching notes and PowerPoint slides), and a family devotional. Use them! If you are interested in subscribing, February's content is also available. At the beginning of each month, subscribers will have access to the next month's material. You have plenty of time to learn the stuff before you teach it.

Finally: We are devoting ourselves to a future of learning, writing, and teaching. As of December 31, 2017, we will not be working for the church in San Antonio. I believe God has called me back to school and am pursuing a Ph.D. in Spirituality over the next five years. It has already shown itself to be a productive and challenging pursuit. Beth and I will be working together to write material for GROUNDED and will be speaking in churches. We have done many weekend workshops for churches that wanted to gain some traction with their youth and family ministries. I am also continuing to teach in Ministry Training Academies and for churches that wish for more in-depth teaching. Please feel free to contact us at beth@pocata.com if you would like to schedule a workshop or speaking engagement. We also welcome you to share with us what you would like to see in our upcoming months of the subscription.

Please visit us at www.GetGroundedForLife.com for your free content and more information.

www.DisciplesToday.org hosts thousands of pages of news, articles and images to help connect disciples and churches around the world. All information and content is freely available for everyone.

Latest Stories on www.DisciplesToday.org:

Go to www.DisciplesToday.org to read the latest Hot News articles and to access the archives for all channels.

• **What is Prayer and Why Do We Pray?**

John Oakes, San Diego, CA, USA — Tuesday, 09 January 2018
Join disciples around the world in January as we devote ourselves to prayer and action. Along with the 31 Days of Prayer series, we are publishing a few additional resources to help strengthen our prayer lives. Email content@dtoday.net if you know of something we should include. We look forward to an amazing...

• **Two New MA Programs at RMSMT!**

Glenn Giles, Denver, CO, USA — Sunday, 07 January 2018
We at Rocky Mountain School of Ministry and Theology are excited to announce that beginning this fall semester 2018 we will start two new Master's Programs to meet the needs of our ICOC students, leaders...

• **Bairds to Join Steps of Jesus and the Apostles Tour this Fall**

DT Travel — Friday, 05 January 2018
Dr. Al and Gloria Baird will be joining the Steps of Jesus and the Apostles tour this fall (October 30-November 11, onboard Celebrity's Constellation cruise...

• **Newest OYC Site: Belfast, Ireland**

One Year Challenge — Thursday, 04 January 2018
This week we are excited to welcome our newest OYC site: Belfast, Ireland! The site has an exciting opportunity for training with a small but growing church. The church in Belfast is looking for an eager and highly teachable sister who will be trained by the women's...

Youth & Family Ministry Resources Every Month!

Dave Pocata, San Antonio, TX, USA

Beth and I are excited to announce that a large-scale project we have been working on is now ready! We are officially launching a monthly subscription service for youth and family ministries at www.GetGroundedForLife.com. Dave Eastman, a dear friend from



Chicago (now leading the church in Indianapolis), once told me, "No one should write a book until they are at least 40 years old." He was commenting on the fact that good ideas should marinate before they are ready to share with others.

Beth and I are about ten years older than Dave's "at least 40," and we have worked in Youth & Family ministry for 17 years. We have spoken to churches around the globe and spent four years in Africa developing youth and family there. Between our time in Chicago, Johannesburg, and San Antonio, we have come to believe in a few fundamental truths about building a healthy ministry.

One, the foundation must always be Jesus Christ: In the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was a strong trend in teen ministries, both inside and outside of the ICOC, to build on culture, adventure, and fun. Although the scriptures were used and taught, teen ministers rarely had a plan for the four years that they influenced the spiritual development of the teens.

Can you imagine a teen showing up to high school and the teachers having no curriculum, no plan? What would they learn? I suppose whatever was on the teacher's heart for the day. Unfortunately, far too many teen ministers do that precisely. They teach what is on their heart that week. Many do not have a four-year plan to educate the teens. Some do, and bravo to them! But the question we have to ask ourselves is, "Are teenagers across the ICOC getting the same opportunity to know God and his word?" We also have many churches that cannot afford to have a full-time teen minister. It is very challenging for a volunteer, after a 40-hours-a-week job, to develop curriculum for teenagers. And, why should they? What if we had a curriculum that was user-friendly, modern, and held to the vital truths of Jesus Christ and his word? We plan to provide that for you.

Two, the family is by far the greatest influence on the development of a teen's life: A significant shift began in the early 2000s in the ICOC. Leaders around the world woke up to the fact that Deuteronomy 6 had not been our primary approach to building teen ministry. Too much responsibility was taken away from the parents and given to great-hearted and young teen volunteers. Our retention rate was around a 20% in the churches we polled. That meant that by the time most of the children that had grown up in the church were in their mid-20s, only one in five was even coming to church

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• UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring Leadership Meetings

Orlando, Florida USA
March 19-23, 2018

International Campus Ministry Conference

Cincinnati, Ohio USA
July 5-8, 2018

2018 NE US Christian Conference

Providence, Rhode Island USA
July 20-22, 2018

Florida Discipleship Conference

Orlando, Florida USA
August 3-5, 2018

International Singles Conference

Phoenix, Arizona USA
August 30 - September 3, 2018

Central American Conference

Panama City, Panama
October 5 - 7, 2018

2020 World Discipleship Summit

Orlando, Florida USA
July 2-5, 2020

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN
CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD



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