

A Philosophy for First Baptist Church Child-Day Care Center by James L. Holly, MD

A statement of philosophy should incorporate general purposes, goals and directions so as to allow particular questions of policy, organization and function to be answered consistent within the tenants of that philosophy. A philosophy of child-day-care provided by the Church of Jesus Christ must carefully define its objectives. Just as no State may enact statutes that are contrary to, or that abridge the federal constitution, no individual expression of the body of Christ -- a local church -- may engage in activities which are contrary to, or which compromise the principles of the Gospel and the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The collective caring for children for remuneration is a modern phenomenon, which to some extent reflects the deterioration of the quality of family life. Certainly, the collective caring for children to relieve parents of the responsibilities of child rearing is diametrically opposed to the principles of Scripture. Therefore, when the church becomes involved in child-day-care, it must be extremely careful, so as not to contribute to the already growing attack on the family.

The distinctively modern development of "aggressive materialism" has made severe inroads into the Judeo-Christian family structure. The implication that the family is an economic unit for the accumulation of as much, for as little, as quickly as possible, finds no support theoretically or practically in the Bible. The non-evolutionary establishment of the family as a God-ordained unit for the development of godly men and women, boys and girls, is at the very heart of God's covenant with His creation. It is incumbent on the church to demonstrate by the life of its members that "aggressive materialism" is rejected. The "good life" does not consist in what we possess, but by Whom we are possessed. (Luke 12:15-34)

Within our society, there are essentially three reasons for both parents in a family being employed outside the home:

- The first, we have already identified, that is, bigger homes, bigger cars, more extravagant vacations; in essence the motivation is created by dissatisfaction with God's provision for the family through the head of the household, the father. The root cause for the dissatisfaction is essentially the carnality of the church fellowship. One of the fruits of the spirit is meekness. "Meekness," in the context of the New Testament, is "that temper of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us as good and therefore respond to them without disputing or resisting." The secular concept of "meekness" has nothing to do with the New Testament concept. Man's lack of meekness and rejection of God's provision for him has been a problem throughout history.

Asa, the King of Judah, when attacked by the Northern Kingdom of Israel, secured assistance from Syria, because he was not confident in the provision of God. Therefore, we read in II Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart

is perfect toward Him. Herein thou has done foolishly; therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.” When we attempt to supplement God’s provision, we always make errors that compound our problems, rather than solving them. So it is with families, which tacitly reject God's provision through the father. In supplementing the provision of God, they sacrifice a great deal of spiritual protection and vitality.

- The second reason is the illusion that our resources, provided by God, are inadequate to meet essential needs, necessitating the working outside the home of both parents. God, Who provided for the children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness, without their turning a shovel, can also provide for our needs in this present world. However, His provision is dependent upon our looking to Him for that supply, and our confidence that he will provide it. (I John 5:14-15) In addition, as a practical matter, the capacity to live on one salary has less to do with how much that salary is, than it does with how much we spend (Matthew 6:19-34).

The entire seventy-eighth Psalm deals with the marvelous provision of God and the rejection of that provision by the children of Israel. Verses 34-42 are particularly important; they state:

“When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy.”

Man’s capacity to rapidly and completely forget God's miracles is repeatedly testified to in the Scriptures (Matthew 6:52-53). The admonition to remember the provision of God is clear in the Scripture. (Deut. 4:5-9; 11:18) David acknowledged the provision of Heavenly Father in Psalm 37:23-23, when he stated:

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in His way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”

It is terribly important for families, as well as churches, to remember that God is sufficient to provide our needs. (II Peter 1:12) When our lives line up with the Word of God, we will find that the things we previously desired will be ours in reality without the destructive influences that could accompany them. (Prov. 10:24)

- The third reason is the outright rejection of God’s ordained structure for the family. The Twentieth century neurosis of, “You've come a long way baby,” has so infiltrated the church that we confuse dignity for women with freedom from the ordinances and

commandments of God. The church has not stood against the deceit that in order to achieve personal meaning and fulfillment, we are required to alter God's plan. Also, the implication that the freedom of man is abridged by his family responsibilities is a lie. This was the deceit of man by the serpent in the Garden of Eden:

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”
(Genesis 3:1-6)

The implication is that God has withheld some good thing from His creation, to capriciously diminish man's pleasure. When that implication is accepted by the foolish man and woman, they sinned against God. Their example and the example of ten thousand years of human history clearly teach us that God has withheld no good thing from us, but, has provided all things for us in His Son, Jesus Christ. The limitations of our freedom have been to protect us from destructive influences. We must diligently and willfully submit ourselves to the ordinance and commandments of our God, particularly in relationship to the structure and function of the family. (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Church Based Day Care

It is desperately important that the philosophy of a church-based day-care incorporate safeguards against these errors. In a positive sense, the philosophy must address the basic commission of the church and the basic purpose of the home. The mere provision of a warm, pleasant, safe environment to pass the hours of the work week is not an adequate philosophy for a “Christian” day-care. Neither is merely reading a few Bible stories to the children adequate to make it a “Christian” day-care. Most startling perhaps is the contention that to pray for the children, to pray for their parents and to pray for their salvation does not provide adequate foundation to call a day-care “Christian.”

What then must the philosophy, and consequently the structure, of a day-care be in order to accredit it "Christian"? When Jesus Christ gave us insight into His philosophy and His purpose, He gave us insight into our own lives. He, also, gave us direction to avoid serious error in the construction of a program or a “ministry” in His church. What did Jesus tell us about a day-care for Twentieth Century “aggressive-materialism” orphans? Jesus said

- “I have come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)
- “I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Matthew 9:13)

Here we have the target group for Jesus Christ's ministry -- the lost and the unrighteous. Concerning the purpose for which He had come to that target group, Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) Jesus reveals to us His goal for the lost and the unrighteous -- that is abundant life.

When Jesus referred to the "lost," He was referring to those who were "alienated from the 'common wealth of Israel,'" to those who were "no people." The lost were those who rejected the principles of the Kingdom of God through their willful disobedience of the commandments of God, as revealed in the creation, in the Law, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. In relationship to the family, there is a significant group which is lost from God's ordained structure. In our society, there are an increasing number of families which have rejected the principles of the Kingdom of God in relationship to the family structure. Divorce rates are increasing to where almost half the marriages end in divorce, as more and more families adopt ungodly life patterns.

Four Groups for Day-Care Ministry in Church

It is apparent that there is an increasingly large number of "lost" families in this world. It is our commission to go and find those lost ones, and to restore them, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the positive dynamic of the Christian family. In relationship to our fellowship, there are at least four groups, which can be identified to which we can address ourselves, i.e., which would be our target groups:

- Indigent-single-parent families
- Indigent two-parent families
- Non-indigent, debt-trapped, two-parent families
- Non-indigent, single-parent families

Our commission and purpose in relationship to each of these needs careful analysis as we develop our philosophy. The needs and consequently our response to the first and the fourth of these groups are very similar. First, we must acknowledge that the necessity of single-parent families requiring day-care, is in itself an indication of the failure of the family structure, and of the church. When the single-parent family has as its head the father, the requirement for him to work and to provide for his children is clearly taught in Scripture. If his wife has either died or abandoned her children, the extended family, (grandparents, brothers, sisters, church family) ought to extend to his children the same gracious care they give to their own. This ought to be done, because we are commanded to do so by our covenant relationship with our Savior. Therefore, collective day-care should not be required.

If the single-parent family has a woman as its head, the need for collective day-care is equally obviated. Under the Sovereign Paternity of our Heavenly Father, care for the fatherless and widows is that which delights the heart of our God. (Proverbs 22:22-23; 23:10-11) The fatherless and the widows should be cared for and supported emotionally and financially by the church and the extended family. (If the circumstances are occasioned by divorce, the same response should emanate from the church. "Fatherless" can result from death or abandonment.)

Therefore, the need for collective day-care exists because of the failure of the family and of the church to properly respond to one another, as God has ordained. In fairness, we must also say that this circumstance also arises from the failure of many individuals to relate themselves to their Heavenly Father and to His Son's Church. That this is an ideal state of affairs in no way diminishes the requirement on the part of every believer and every fellowship to employ every effort to exercise themselves to develop (II Peter 1:5, Amplified) such an organized response to particular circumstances in the family life of believers and non-believers.

Nevertheless, we find that single-parent families do require day-care. How should our response be constructed? Once we have met the requirement to provide the same basic needs, i.e., warmth, safety, loving care, that the secular day-care provides, we must fulfill the commission which we have from our Lord. The first commission is to be a "restorer." We must employ ourselves to teach the single-parent, by example and precept, his relationship to his Heavenly Father. To restore God's creation to dependency on its Sovereign Creator is the greatest calling which we have. Simultaneously with this effort, we must have as our purpose the re-establishment of the God-ordained covenant between this single-parent and the parent who has been rejected or who has abandoned his or her family. This, of course, will be limited by either the death or re-marriage of that partner. The genius of such a goal in the economy of God's Kingdom revitalizes an otherwise contradictory exercise. That is, when we provided day-care, we could be encouraging the desolution of marginal marriage relationships. But, when our purpose is preeminently the restoration or maintenance of such relationships, we become ministers of reconciliation. This puts us in the will and purpose of the Most High God, rather than working against God's purposes (Acts 5:38-42)

This will not be fulfilled by a day-care which is well-organized and securely financed, but by a day-care, which is an actual extension of the passion for souls of the entire Christian fellowship which commissions the day-care. The contact with and care for the families involved must extend to every area of family life. To seek out and minister to the absent member of the family (when that member is not re-married or deceased) will be required by such a philosophy. Great prayer will be required to allow our Heavenly Father to energize the restoration of broken relationships. We must learn how to wage spiritual warfare with the powers of darkness. Satan's desire to destroy the family is seen in his resolute resistance to the restoration of families. The entire book of Hosea teaches us some of the principles of this type of warfare. Hosea 2:6-7 states:

"Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now."

To pray that the lovers or interests, which have lured the mate away from the family, will lose their interest or lose their appeal, and consequently the mate will return home, and re-establish their family unit, is one of the highest callings of the Christian fellowship. This role will obviously require more than just a casual interest in the family, and will require great personal involvement.

The second principle is to meet the physical needs of the children, so as to enable the single-parent to concentrate on the spiritual and emotional needs of the children and of the family. Often, when a woman is the head of the family, earning power is significantly decreased putting additional stress on the family's survival. (the solution to this is not the ERA, but the return of our society to biblical principles). The church-sponsored day-care ministers by providing quality care at a significantly reduced cost, thus extending the family's ability to survive financially. With total involvement in the family, responsibility will extend even to care at no cost, and, potentially, even to providing money for food, clothing, housing, etc. Ultimately, when this becomes a ministry, dinner, in a family setting, will be provided by the church day-care. Then when the children and the single-parent go home, they do so to spend time with one another, rather than to continue to struggle to meet one another's physical needs.

With the day-care as a central focus of a redemptive fellowship, rather than as an economically independent appendage, the single-parent, whose family is receiving total ministry provides an excellent opportunity for home Bible studies and for neighborhood "extension" church fellowships. Every activity of the church should be to demonstrate to individuals the loving care (hesed) of their Heavenly Father. Once that loving care is apparent in the salvation of Jesus Christ, every activity must be to teach each individual how to relate to their God. The day-care is an excellent avenue for this to be accomplished. When the ills of society limit the family's capacity to fulfill God's plan, God will equip the collective family, the church, to supplement the agency of the family, and meet those needs. So as the family fails, the church steps in, discipling the parents and children. The discipleship of all believers is the heartbeat of the Christian church's life. The day-care can become a vehicle for discipleship

Indigent, Two-Parent Family

The second of our groups is the indigent, two-parent family. Here the creative power of the Holy Spirit is most exciting. Many of the families are surviving only marginally. They are not abundantly living, neither are they being overcomers. They are virtually overwhelmed by the society in which they struggle to survive. Consequently, a Christian day-care can reach out to these people, alleviating to some extent the economic pressures on them, so that their energies can be concentrated on the nurturing of the family in a godly environment.

The support services available to these people must be in every area of their life. The strengthening of the marriage relationship through the loving care of the church family can be a dynamic factor in decreasing the rampant divorce rate among indigent families. In addition, the motivation provided by the loving care of a church fellowship through a day-care can assist in stimulating ambition and diligence of the father of the household to improve his earning capacity. Ultimately, the father can provide in such a way as to alleviate the necessity for the wife to work.

The exhortation to diligence in is Scriptural:

- Romans 12:11 states: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

- Proverbs 21:4 states: “The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore, shall he beg in harvest and have nothing.”
- Proverbs 10:4 states: “He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.”

This is not attempting to identify capitalism and Christianity as being co-terminal philosophies, but, rather teaching that God liberates His people to become the best they are capable of becoming. While we are exhorted to look after the benefit of our fellowman (I Corinthians 10:24), we are, also, exhorted to diligence and to stewardship in our own work. To communicate this to a segment of our society which has failed to learn these lessons is as significant a ministry as teaching them the Word of God. However, it is only a ministry when it is done with the intention of glorifying our Heavenly Father by developing His principles and His patterns into family life. While it is apparent that the day-care cannot fulfill this commission in and of itself, it provides a forum in which the effort can begin.

Non-indigent, Two-Parent Family

The third target group is the non-indigent, two-parent family where both parents work, because they are debt trapped. The commission of the day-care in their lives is obvious. The day-care can give them the vision of God's pattern for the family. To involve families in financial counseling and family counseling (again not necessarily by “professionals,” but by spiritual Christians, who are called to this ministry by the Lord Jesus Christ), to teach them to get out and to stay out of debt so that the mother can return home to provide a godly environment for the rearing of children, are principle thrusts of this program.

The providing of no-cost day-care will free funds which can be applied in a systematic manner to eliminate debt, thus decreasing the necessity for the second parent to work outside of the home. Again, the providing of low-cost day-care can attract families who at first do not have any interest in one of the parents returning home, but who can be ministered to, and who consequently can catch the vision of God's ordained pattern for the family.

The total involvement with the family is obvious because of the need for financial, spiritual and family counseling. For those whom God has convicted of the central purpose of the family, we can assist them in carrying out the vision for debtlessness. The counseling and support needed for such an endeavor are tremendous. To develop and re-enforce new approaches to life based on scriptural principles is difficult, but rewarding (II Peter 1:12-21)

Guiding Principles in Selecting Participants

While we have identified four target groups for our day-care ministry, these four readily fit into two sets. The one set is that of members of our fellowship. The second set is non-members, principally those families and individuals who live within a two-mile radius of our church building. This introduces the second half of our quest for a philosophy.

How are we to choose the individuals and the families who will receive this ministry? Here our philosophy is more critical than ever. The practicality of our effort is totally dependent on the clarity of our theory. If we are to honor our God, we must be very careful at this point. What are the principles which will guide our selection of people? There are five:

- Vulnerability, willing to be used -- Luke 6:30
- Openhandedness -- Deuteronomy 15:7ff
- Give ourselves rather than just our money -- II Corinthians 8:5; I Thessalonians 2:8
- Do this as unto the Lord -- I Corinthians 10:30
- Go to the "other" than ourselves -- Luke 6:34

When developing charity programs, one of the guiding principles in the minds of men is to prevent fraudulent access to the benefits. Christians must clearly understand that what we are doing is not charity. It is not a benevolent exercise stemming from a humanistic instinct of noblesse oblige. What we are about is the essential expression of the love which our Heavenly Father has for us, and of our reciprocation of that love -- while we reciprocate that love to God personally, it is most often acted out toward our fellowman. This is the dynamic of the *hesed* of God, which is the basis of God's covenant with Abraham.

As a result, we are less concerned with abuse of our resources, than we are concerned to alleviate the abuse of the family by the excesses of a de-humanized society. We must as a matter of principle be prepared to be vulnerable. We must be ready to be taken advantage of. We must be ready to sacrifice our program efficiency, and to see our resources squandered, for the salvation of our fellowman. This has always been the way of the Cross, but it has seldom been the way which the church has taken.

If we continue to relate to others on the basis of "fairness" and "justice," we exclude ourselves from the operation of the Kingdom of God, which functions on the basis of *hesed*, i.e., mercy (Psalm 138:8; Hosea 2:19) We must exercise ourselves in godliness by covenanting to deal with the day-care according to the needs of others, and not according to our own needs. To deal with others, not sanctimoniously, because we do not "need," but mercifully, because we have received mercy, which incorporates compassion, love and self-sacrifice into our ministry to others.

This is going to be among the most difficult principles to follow, because we are so conditioned to operate on the principles of this word-system. The church maintains a one-month reserve to demonstrate a fiscal responsibility, but in reality expresses doubt as to the capacity of our Heavenly Father to provide our needs. The church has become a

democracy, where the majority rules, no matter how contrary that rule is to the "Rules" of the Kingdom of God. The church has become a microcosm of strife, of partyism, and of division characteristic of the world-system. Adoption of the methodology of the world has been so consistent and complete that we have difficulty recognizing and understanding that that is what we have done. Therefore, it will be difficult to alter our approach in this instance. Nevertheless, no matter how difficult, we must be diligent (II Peter 1:10) to avoid the errors which result from ignoring this basic principle. If our day-care becomes a toddler-country club for the middle and upper-middle class, it may prosper, but it will not minister. (Luke 6:34)

The second principle is a corollary to the first, we must be "openhanded," not only in selecting people, but, also, in deciding the extent of assistance to be given to each family. The concept of "openhandedness" is taught by Moses in Deuteronomy 15:7-11, which states:

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.”

The burden on the part of the prospering brother to give to his brother who has need is clearly taught. In verse eight, we are taught not only to give him sufficient for his needs, but we are to give him what he wants as well. This provides a standard for giving, a new standard for helping and extending aide to others, which the church has previously rejected. We no longer give them according to our perception of their need, but according to their perception of their need. A child who offers M&Ms to his friend frequently does so with his hand closed tightly, so as to allow only one M&M to be removed at a time. So often, when we are attempting to extend God's grace to others, we deal with them in this same "closed-fisted M&M" way. We must open our hand widely, thereby allowing others to receive abundantly of the grace of God through our agency. It is then that the grace of God is manifested through us to others.

This is contrary to our natural inclination. The writer of Proverbs stated: "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meat, yet tendeth to poverty." (Proverbs 11:24) It is in giving willing and gladly that we find the joy of our salvation in the exercise. Proverbs 19:17 states: "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord and that which he hath given will He pay to him again." When we "openhandedly" give to our brothers, we are giving to God. We truly discover the dynamic of New Testament *koinonia*. This is exactly what Jesus Christ was teaching in Matthew 18 and Matthew 25.

Again this principle violates the sensibilities of the natural man or carnal Christian, who operates on the basis of our determination of the needs of others. The life of our Savior is such a contradiction of the world's philosophy -- even as it has been adopted by the church. The Son of God never dealt with people on the basis of His perfect understanding of their needs, but always first met their needs as they perceived them. Therefore, He released them to receive His solution for their needs, Himself! The only restriction on this principle was the withholding of that which would be destructive or harmful. The problem with Christianity by committee is that it tends to entrench the giving or doing of only that which it determined to be needed. We must be prepared to be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit, Who communicates with us through our spirit, than we are to our intellect, which is conditioned by the world-system to judge by our perception and knowledge.

The third principle is that we must give ourselves rather than just giving our money, or our influence. This is not a platitude but a practical issue. If our fellowship wishes to see a day-care become a ministry, it must give itself to the effort. It is impossible to "hire" others to do ministry. Others may be hired to do a job, but a ministry is done by those whom God has called -- in this case the membership of a local Christian church. We are amazed at the ministry which the Apostle Paul had, but one of the essential principles of his life was the he gave himself to others. In I Thessalonians 2:8, Paul said: "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." Paul had learned that he could not just tell people what was right. He could not just instruct them on how to live; he literally had to give his life to them as a ransom and a sacrifice.¹ He truly learned the genius of Matthew 10:26-28 where he became a living sacrifice for others. Paul had discovered that ministering to others required more than communicating the tenants of the Gospel. It was also necessary to demonstrate the caring of the Lord Jesus Christ to them by giving his life for them.

If the day-care is to be a ministry:

- It will involve visiting the homes and family members of the participants.
- It will mean practical help for these members, such as health care, legal aide, financial counseling, auto repair, etc.

This will not be done by "professionals," who are hired for the purpose because they have this world-order's credentials, but it will be done by Spirit-filled Christians, who in the unction and power of the Holy Spirit, minister with the wisdom which comes from above. (Isaiah 50:4; I Corinthians 2:11) This involvement cannot be provided only by those involved in organizational activities of the day-care, but must be provided by the total church fellowship. If this commitment is not present on the part of the total congregation, the most we can expect is a quality secular baby-sitting service.

The Twentieth-century prophet, Leonard Ravenhill has often said, "What the world needs is not a new definition of Christianity, it needs a new demonstration of it."¹ We, like the

¹For more on this principle see, "Seven Principles of a Man of God," in *Men's Conference Manual Volume I*, published by Mission and Ministry to Men, Inc.

Son of Man, must demonstrate our faith when we give ourselves to others, keeping no area of our life untouched by the miseries of our fellowman. In doing this, we have an opportunity truly to be participants in the “fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:10). In the 58th chapter of Isaiah, the prophet relates the nature of the fast which the Lord desires. It is not the fast of outward religiosity, but it is:

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday” (Isaiah 58:6-10)

To “draw out” one’s soul is literally to pour out one’s self for the benefit of your fellowman. It is here that a true ministry will be created within our fellowship in relationship to a day-care center.

The fourth principle is that we must go to those who are “other” than ourselves. Jurgen Moltmann, in his book *The Crucified God*, discusses this concept. He argues that Jesus Christ did not go to those who were “like” Him, for if He had, He would have stayed in heaven with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Who alone are “like” Him. From this he argues that we minister most effectively when we go to those who are not “like” us, who are “other” than us.

The Scriptures tell us that our God humbled Himself to look upon the things in heaven and in earth. (Psalm 113;5) We must avoid one of the basic deceits of the enemy, and that is that we minister to others principally on the basis of our similarities, when it is most often our differences which enable us to minister to each other. In addition, it is not our strengths which minister to others, but rather our weaknesses -- the areas where we have required and have received ministry from the Lord. (See II Corinthians 1:3-4; 12:9) The person who most understands the destructiveness of a debt-trap is one who has undergone bankruptcy with the attendant humiliation.

This is not to say that we must experience each particular human dilemma in order to minister, but we must have, at some point, come to grips with our innate helplessness, have received the grace of God, and have seen that grace work the miracle of restoration, reconciliation and/or regeneration (Isaiah 41:17-20) in our lives, before we can help others. Therefore, it is possible to minister to an alcoholic, if you have never had a drink of alcohol, because you do have the compulsive habit and sin of gluttony. Just as we did not and could not recognize the Creator God, but had to meet Him in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, so others will seldom be able to recognize the Creator God in our lives in the areas in which we excel. They will meet Him in our weaknesses and frailties, in those areas where God’s grace has been manifested, there others can interface with our God. In giving ourselves to others, we must do it at the point where we hurt the most.

We must be willing to be transparent, to let others see us as God sees us. It is here that ministry takes place. In the book, *The Wounded Healer*, Henri J. W. Nouwen discusses the relationship between personal injury, and the ability to help those who are injured.

It is as we receive ministry from God that we are equipped to help others. It is at the points where we have received ministry that we can then help others. It is as we recognize our own ineptness that we are able to help others. Hebrews 5:2 states: "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." The High Priest, though exalted in his position in Israel, could not pridefully look down upon others, because he knew that he struggled with the same sins as the people. One who has come to grips with his own infirmities cannot maintain an arrogant and detached view of the inadequacies of others, but must participate in their recovery from their inadequacies, thereby, enabling them to be strengthened, and to become more than they otherwise could have been.

Within this principle, there is the need for God to teach us to love as He loves. Those who are "other" than us are seldom lovable to us. They do not look like us, act like us, dress like us, or live like us. Consequently, we have difficulty giving ourselves to them. We must, therefore, empty ourselves of "self," before we can minister to those who are "other" than us. It is significant that Jesus Christ literally had to "empty" Himself -- in His kenosis -- and take on the frailties of the human body, before He could be of benefit to us. (Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 2:14-18) It is the same with us; we must empty ourselves of our religiosity, our strengths, our advantages, before we are able to minister to those who are without the benefit of our relationship to Christ. It is only God Who is capable of doing this. He can and will make us capable of ministering in this dynamic and vital way, if we will seek that role. (John 12:24-25)

The fifth principle is that we participate in the day-care center and work in other's lives as if we were doing it "unto the Lord." Therefore, we give them our best, and not our acceptable. We give them the "first fruits," and not what is left over. We give them gladly (II Corinthians 9:6-8), knowing that God has promised to honor our gift. (Proverbs 19:17) We do it selflessly, because our Lord gave Himself for us. We do it selfishly, because we know that our works will be tried by our God (I Peter 1:17-20; Romans 14:12ff; I Corinthians 3:13ff) Only what is done in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ will last. It is uncertain whether successfully running a church building program or achieving high attendance Sundays will be "hay, wood, or stubble," but it is the clear testimony of the Word of God, that when we give the least of these a cup of water, we give it to the Lord. (Matthew 25:40)

Anyone that has gotten to this point may begin to ask if "the tail is not wagging the dog." Here we have a program not yet started, funded with less than 4% of our annual budget, and it appears that the entire energy of the church is to be directed to its success. The greater this appears as an inconsistency, the more apparent it is that our collective priorities have been misplaced. Just as an individual has God-ordained priorities, which dictate time utilization, energy expenditure, and resource allocation, so our fellowship has priorities. Equally true is that as with an individual, the lesser priorities can become poorly focused, and thusly appear to represent principle goals, so with the fellowship.

The adage, “the squeaky wheel get the grease,”² is true so far as it goes. But, it does not address the issue of the wheel in the overall machinery of the organization. While a leaking roof may demand our attention, it may distract us from our principle purposes.

There is no more practical statement of the priorities of “true” religion that the book of James. He defines true religion in James 1:25-26. He describes the vacuous meaningless faith of good intentions, without resolute action (James 2:24-26). If this philosophy of church-commissioned-collective-child day-care seems exaggerated, that is only an appearance. It may be that this is an exciting departure for the most significant ministry that this fellowship has ever undertaken. The appropriation of thirty-six thousand dollars is only the admission price. It will not sustain the opportunity truly to minister in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are to minister, we must be a servant in the humblest characteristic of that statement. (Matthew 20:25-27) We must, if we are to minister, give ourselves as a ransom for others. We must remember that a ransom (substitute) has nothing to say about its fate, but is only the purchase price for the benefit of another. Let us covenant to ransom from the enemy, with our lives, the lives of children, of parents, indeed of families, to the glory of our God.

What then is our philosophy, our guiding principle of church-sponsored day-care? It is that we covenant as saints in the Kingdom of God, to extend the mercy and care of that Kingdom to all those who are our neighbors in the context of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. To initiate that process we will:

- Actively seek members of our family who wish to be involved, to escape the debt-trap. They will be interviewed by one member of our congregation, who will prayerfully recommend their participation. The philosophy and requirements of the program will be carefully explained to participants in this aspect of the program. A mechanism for accountability will be established with each family. Financial counseling, family counseling and other needed services will be provided for them. Again, these will not be necessarily provided by “professionals,” but by Spirit-filled, God-ordained servants. At any time that the family desires, they can be removed from the program, and begin to pay the cost of day-care.
- Through actively seeking those who are “other” than us, we will extend the mercy of the Kingdom of God to non-members of our fellowship, who are in need. Unlike the first group, where there are conditions placed on participation, in this group there are no requirements for participation, other than an expressed need. The percentage of support given to each of these will be determined by the child-care committee.
- The import and impact of this program on the life of our fellowship will be discussed in Sunday School, opening assemblies, prayer meetings and publications to the entire church. The support of the fellowship and prayer and participation will be solicited.

²This adage has been interpreted by Intervarsity Press into a booklet called, *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. Written by Charles E. Hummel, this booklet discusses how easily Christians can be distracted from that which is important by that which is immediate. Every Christian and every church program committee should read and heed its message.

As we learn to minister I reality to these categories of people, we will be inundated with needs of our fellowman, and with opportunities to minister to them. As we give away that which we cannot keep -- our own lives -- to gain that which we cannot lose -- the pleasure and glory of God -- the Kingdom of Heaven will be wondrously manifested in the church.

Larry Holly, MD

Further Challenge About A Church-Based Day-Care

February 3, 1982

The enclosed article from the February, 1982 issue of *Texas Monthly* entitled, "Waiting for Mommy," is a compelling description and analysis of the current state of our society in reference to this thing called day-care. In copying the article for you, I have taken the liberty of underscoring parts which are particularly important. It is hard to read this article without being very sad for the plight these parents find themselves in. However, I also feel irritation that a secular magazine such as *Texas Monthly* expresses more insight into the plight of children and parents than most fellowships, who call themselves by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A sampling of quotations from this article follows:

- "Our society has less and less regard for someone who stays home to take care of children." (p. 126)
- "But these people have a choice about the kinds of lives they're leading because they found an affordable solution to one big problem: what to do with the kids all day." (p. 126)
- "During that time, the strongest emotional and physical bond there is -- that between a mother and her child is broken. What long term effect this will have on children, on their parents, and on society, no one knows." (p. 190)
- "What 'Here We Grow' does well, it does well because of the talent and dedication of Mrs...What it does badly, every day-care does badly by its very nature." (p. 185)
- "If they get what they want often enough, they become spoiled, and that, in a day-care center is to avoided at all costs. Unfortunately, in day-care parlance, spoiling a child has come to mean giving him what every child needs and wants -- not candy or fancy toys, or cute clothes, but hugs and kisses and soft words. Spoiling a child is a sin and pain in the neck, for the child who is spoiled cannot be left alone without creating a miserable scene." (p. 186)
- "Most parents don't want to discipline their children, and that makes our job much harder. They feel guilty about not having been with their children all day, and the last thing they want to do is make them angry and resentful by scolding them...otherwise, dad is going to come home and find his wife screaming, the kids screaming, and he will say, 'Okay, enough. My family is falling apart. My wife had better stay home.'" (p. 188)
- "Clearly, Mommy is the one with whom the children rightfully belong, to their minds at least." (p. 189)

- “No matter how good their reasons for putting their children in a day-care center, parents carry an enormous burden of guilty about the decision.” (p. 190)
- “Let’s face it...no child is really happy in a day-care center.” (p. 190)
- “But in reality, quality time is rare. It cannot be planned or forced and it cannot be counted on to happen according to schedule...special moments crop up unexpectedly, and usually only after the ground between parent and child is prepared with a great deal of nurturing..furthermore, as adults we tend to seek...constancy, a sense that a person will always be there. Why should children want anything different?” (p.190)
- “Furthermore, the economic justification for Joyce’s job is a close call...by the time you figure out how much it costs for the wife to go to work, I’m not sure it is worth it. Car repairs, gas, clothes, day-care...I guess it is worth it for now. I just figure day-care is a necessary evil.” (p. 191)
- “With family bonds disintegrating everywhere...I wanted to make sure the twins understood what a family is and how important it is.” (p. 191)

These statements alone are startling and alarming. If a secular magazine can have such insights into child rearing, how much more should a fellowship of believers who have the very mind of Christ available to them be perceptive about such endeavors. With all this, the most damning quotation in this article comes from the last several paragraphs:

“But the growing dependency on day-care is not without its consequences. That day-care is rapidly becoming as important a part of a child's upbringing as his family represents a radical shift in the nature of our society, one for which we are almost completely unprepared. We are rushing to day-care centers, while in countries that have been using them for a long time -- like the USSR, Sweden and Israel -- there is growing concern over the negative impact that centers have on children who grow up in them. It is startling to find such overwhelming support of collectives of children in a city like Houston (and), among people who would not dream of living in communes or pooling food supplies to stock a neighborhood refrigerator. Has the child become a less important part of the family? The ease with which those of us who have a choice can turn to day-care -- and find theories about what we are doing to assuage our guilty consciences -- is distracting us from making difficult demands...but two adults should be able to compromise their careers and life styles before they ask a child to compromise his childhood. Most day-care centers -- not all -- are far from being evil places. But, they are not good enough yet. Not if we want to give our children a childhood they will cherish for the rest of their lives, and try to return to in some secret part of their souls.” (p. 190)

A balanced view of this article and of the entire issue of the day-care phenomenon demands the conclusion that day-cares are a compromise of the family. Because of the failure of our society to properly relate itself to its Creator God and because of the failure of the churches as the representative of God on this earth, day-care centers may be a necessity. Certainly, one-parent families require day-care where there are dependent children in the family. As pointed out recently in “A Philosophy Concerning Day-Care Center for FBC,” this is as a result of the church failing to fulfill its responsibility to the families in its community.

Certainly debt-trapped families require day-care, until those families can expurgate themselves from that circumstance. It is a serious question in my mind, and I trust in

your mind, whether or not a church ought to be in the business of encouraging people to abandon their children to collective care, and whether or church, in particular, is supporting the further undermining of the family in this endeavor. To provide, free day-care, as a ministry to those who are in need, is certainly consistent with the commandment of the Gospel to love our brother and to meet his needs. But, to provide a fee-for-service day-care system, which is in no fashion different from that of a secular society, is a compromise, a serious compromise, for the New Testament Church.

I would like to propose that our day-care committee and child development committee develop a philosophy which would be consistent with New Testament principles of the family and the New Testament church. Further, I propose, that that philosophy be communicated to our church fellowship, and that the structure and the funding of our day-care center be altered dramatically to comply with that philosophy. I would further like to suggest that our day-care center be open to those who are single-parent families, or to those families that are debt-trapped, and who are desirous of working out of that debt-trap. I would like to suggest that our day-care not be open to those who are merely interested in abandoning their children for either reasons of bigger cars, bigger houses, or because of the sense of lack of fulfillment in the God-ordained role of child rearing.

I would further like to recommend that the members of our church be intimately involved in ministering in this area, that the men and women of our church volunteer their time and their efforts to provide the care required for these children. While it certainly will be necessary to hire a few full-time people, the majority of this caring should be done by the redemptive fellowship of FBC.

In his book, *The Kingdom of God*, John Bright states:

“But Amos knew that society’s sin is far more than overt crookedness and greed. It is also a luxury -- loving ease that places its comfort above human beings and is unconcerned about the deep schism in the social order...a society so broken cannot possibly heal itself by much religion. The busy religion of a people that has flaunted all righteousness will avail nothing with God; nay more, it is a positive offense to Him...thus it was at a time when society desperately needed criticism, yet when established religion could not deliver that criticism, nor even criticize itself, that the protest had to come from outside the organized church. And that, plainly, was a horrible state of affairs...it tells us what we need to hear: That a society that cares more for gain than for honor, for its living standard than for God, is sick to the death; that a church which has no rebuke for society, which demands lavish support before righteous behavior, it no true church but a sham of a church...nor can a correct creed play substitute for plain obedience to the divine Will in all aspects of life.” (pp. 51-63)

These seem like such harsh words, but they need to be heard. It seems like such a radical departure to argue against day-care. How can you argue against the trend of the time? But, that is just what the Christian church is called to do! Not to copy the secular society, not to imitate it, but to call it to judgment, to call it to answer for its ills. In this area of day-care, it is critical that the FBC cease to just copy secular society. It is not enough that we want “to care.” It is not enough that we want to provide a “Christian environment” for these children. It is not enough that we want to try to use the world's techniques for undoing the ills of society. God has said He will not sanctify the flesh. He will not use

the world's technology or the world's means to accomplish His purposes. We must not only pursue His purposes, we must pursue them with His Principles. If we are in a quandary as to what to do, we must, with Jehoshaphat, cry out:

“O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee.” (II Chronicles 20:12)

If we, indeed, are ensnared and do not how to extricate ourselves, then we must not just continue on because of our ineptness. We must seek of God how to solve the problem we have gotten ourselves into. Before you, out of hand, disregard this letter and article as the "ravings of a mad fanatic," let me challenge you to produce scriptural support for day-care centers. Produce a scriptural rationale for the church not supporting those in its fellowship, who are in need: Produce a scriptural excuse for the church not to provide for the needs of those who are even outside of its fellowship. It is only with such evidence that you can argue persuasively for the church to have a fee-for-service day-carecenter.

We all long for revival in our fellowship. That revival will never come as long as we continue to compromise the Holy Church of God, the local church, by involving her in activities which are contrary to the principles and purposes of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. If you should desire to discuss these concept, I would be delighted to discuss the issues involved. Whether our church abandons what I consider to be folly or not, I will continue to pray for it, and to exercise my soul and spirit to know and follow the Will of God in my life and to encourage others to do that in their lives.

My love and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ

James L. Holly, MD