

# Perfect Partners

BY JOHN DESAULNIERS, JR.

The Bible teaches that God created two relational institutions: the family, and the Church. While God also created the institution of human government, its purpose is more judicial rather than relational. Both the family and the Church are given responsibilities and instructions for care, nurturing, support, and reproductive growth of their respective entities. Government, in its proper biblical role, defends against evil, ideally making society safe for both the family and the Church to flourish.

While the two are distinct, there are so many parallels between the Church and the family, that Gene Getz described the family as “the church in miniature” (*The Measure of a Family*, p. 13, 1976, G/L Publications). The apostle Paul also used the imagery of family to describe the Church (e.g., *Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:19, and 1 Timothy 3:15*). And within the framework of God’s plan for people, their missions are parallel: to educate and disciple their members.

Jesus gave what we call the Great Commission to the Church (*Matthew 28:18-20*). As the Church, we are to go into all the world, make disciples of all the nations, baptize those disciples, and teach them to observe Christ’s commands. As parents, we are to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (*Ephesians 6:4*). Paul’s command is no different than the command given through Moses to the people of Israel in *Deuteronomy 6:6-9*, or the admonition of Asaph in *Psalms 78:5-8*.

In other words, the family does in miniature what the Church does on a larger scale - integrating faith and Christian practice into every aspect of life and learning. For the family to do so rightly and well, the family must be a part of a larger, local expression of the Church. It is the Church that is the pillar and support of truth (*1 Timothy 3:15*). It is the Church that is given the role of evangelizing and discipling the world. And the reality is, if we are in Christ, we are part of the Church.

The family does not replace the Church, and the Church does not replace the family. They are partners, sharing in the responsibilities of discipleship. It is because of the recognition of this biblical partnership that Homeschool Iowa, the Network of Iowa Christian Home Educators, is excited to launch its church and pastoral relations initiative. While home-educated students make up a rather small percentage of the K-12 population (2.3 million, or just over 4%, see [www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling/](http://www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling/)), the integration of faith and academics in an organic learning setting represents a miniature replication of how the Church organically matures believers by speaking biblical faith to every area of life.

As homeschooling caught hold in Christian families in the ‘80s and ‘90s, it can’t be denied that there were some bumps in the road and, at times, strained and even broken, relationships with local churches and their leaders. This is unfortunate, though a somewhat common theme in zealous movements throughout history. But the good news is that history also records how God’s work continues, how relationships are restored and strengthened by God’s mercy and grace, and how iron sharpens iron for the benefit of all concerned when the Spirit is given control.

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The long-term goal of our church and pastoral relations initiative is to develop a better, mutually supporting network of churches, church leaders, and homeschool families in the state of Iowa. Many churches have developed resources that help families in education and discipleship of their children. Many homeschool families have found their churches far more supportive than they first knew or expected. Homeschool Iowa wants to help build bridges between these two perfect partners -- the local church and the homeschooling family -- to help strengthen Christ-centered education and discipleship for generations to come.

If you are a pastor or church leader, I’d love to connect with you. If you’re a homeschooling parent with a supportive local church, let’s talk. If you’re either a church leader or parent who’s having a bit of a challenge with “the other side,” I’d like to visit as well. God’s plan is for the Christian family and the Church to both demonstrate faith, hope, and love to the world and to one another until Christ returns. I hope you’ll join me in this new venture of intentionally and strategically working together toward that end.



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