

NBC Elder's Statement **ON FAMILY MINISTRIES**

1. Reasoning & Purpose for this Statement

The modern evangelical Church in America tends to hold certain philosophies and expectations with regard to what is often called “*men’s ministry*”, “*women’s ministry*”, and “*children’s ministry*” programs. We understand that Noblesville Baptist does not necessarily fit the typical mold on this issue, and this is rooted in the biblical convictions of the elders.

The following statement therefore is an attempt by the elders to both clearly explain the convictions and concerns we share with regard to what we refer to as “*family ministries*”, as well as explain the ways in which we strive to fulfill the legitimate needs of men, women, and children outside of our Sunday gathering.

Our unwavering commitment is to align our convictions, beliefs, and practices with the teachings of Scripture. We have spent considerable time in conversation and prayer seeking God's wisdom on these matters, and we hope this statement is beneficial to the people of Noblesville Baptist Church for years to come.

2. The Priority of Lord's Day Worship

We believe the normative practice for the Church (as described in Scripture and practiced throughout church history) is to minister to whole families (Deuteronomy 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-3; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). Therefore, on the Lord's Day, we believe our primary aim is to gather in one assembly to worship Christ. We believe there is a place for facilitating relationships and Christian fellowship amongst various demographics (men, women, youth, elderly, singles, etc.), however, this should not compete against, nor replace the importance and simplicity of Lord's Day worship in the gathered assembly.

Additionally, we believe that elders are to be the normative instructors of doctrine within the church. This does not mean that others cannot be engaged in teaching, discipleship, and counseling. It is more an affirmation of the need for elders to be chiefly eldering the flock in accordance with God's design. We understand the elders have a unique calling, gifting, and responsibility to be the primary teachers of the church (1 Timothy 5:17; Ephesians 4:11-13; James 3:1).

3. The Priority of Non-Lord's Day Ministries

Though the Sunday gathering is the primary means of ministry to our flock, we also understand that all Christian men and women have a responsibility to use their spiritual gifts in the life of the local church within the boundaries provided in the Word of God (1 Peter 4:10-11). The New Testament not only allows for, but commands other believers and members of the body to teach in various contexts. For example, all Christians have the responsibility to be teaching one another as we all pursue maturity in Christ (Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16; Galatians 6:1). Parents have the responsibility to teach and train their children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4). Likewise, according to Scripture, older men and women have a responsibility to teach younger men and women (Titus 2:1-5). It is the conviction of the elders that these Scriptures be obeyed and encouraged in the life of our local church through additional ministry opportunities.

Ministry to Men

In alignment with passages such as Proverbs 27:17, Titus 2:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 16:13-14, we believe the older, wiser men of NBC play an important role in training up the next generation of men in godly masculinity, righteousness, and practical Christian living. This is why we see value in providing occasional opportunities for men-only contexts such as small groups, Bible studies, retreats, and other events which facilitate healthy discipleship. We want to encourage masculine discipleship to be taking place, both organically as well as through the means of organized church programs.

Ministry to Women

Likewise, we support the women of NBC exercising their gifts for the edification of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7). In alignment with passages like Proverbs 27:17, and Titus 2:3-5, we believe older women teaching younger women in godly femininity, righteousness, and practical Christian living can and should be taking place in the local church. This is why we see value in providing occasional opportunities for women-only contexts such as small groups, Bible studies, retreats, and other events which facilitate healthy discipleship. We want to encourage feminine discipleship to be taking place, both organically as well as through the means of organized church programs.

Ministry to Young Adults

As it pertains to our young adults, (those ranging in age from 12-18), we are convinced that the best thing for them is to be receiving the benefits of as much godly discipleship as possible through the means of the above-mentioned men and women of our church. The tendency of our world is to prolong so called “adolescence” as long as possible, often throughout the teen years and into the early twenties. Likewise, the modern American Church has a tendency to frequently isolate teenagers from the rest of the body, in an effort to “reach them at their level”.

Yet, we believe this strategy (which is relatively and historically new), has largely borne bitter fruit for generations in American churches, as thousands of young adults walk away from the faith regularly in our nation. Sadly, this approach to “isolated youth ministry” stands in stark contrast to what we read in Proverbs 13:20 for example which says, “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

To the contrary then, we are convinced from Scripture that the healthiest way for young adults to develop and mature into faithful, Christian adulthood is for them to spend as much time with older, wiser, faithful, Christian adults as possible during such an important phase of life. This is why we encourage our men and women to bring their teens along with them as often as possible for both formal and organic adult ministry opportunities.

We are not opposed however to occasional majority teen contexts, which is why we provide parent-chaperoned fellowship events throughout the year. This allows for our teens to enjoy the blessings of friendships and fun activities, along with the steady influence of older men and women of the church in their lives.

Ministry to Children

We love ministering to the younger children of NBC, and we believe passing the faith down to the next generation is one of our most important callings as Christians (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalms 127:3-5, Ephesians 6:4). Therefore, we take seriously the spiritual needs and development of our children.

This is precisely why we do *not* provide separate children’s ministries during the Sunday worship service of the church. This is intentional because we believe the children of our church are an important part of the people of God, and should therefore be present in the corporate assembly. It is important for our children to have the liturgy of Christian worship shaping their earliest memories, watching and learning from the adults, and participating in the worship of the triune God. Our pastors do their best to feed all the members of the flock (even the little ones) throughout the liturgy, Scripture readings, songs, prayers, and the preaching of the Word on the Lord’s Day.

Yet, in addition to our Lord’s Day gathering, we also offer special children’s programs such as children’s Bible classes, VBS, children’s choir, holiday plays and programs, as well as other family-oriented events throughout the year. These ministry opportunities create uniquely child-focused contexts for training up the next generation in the faith.

4. Practical Ministry Opportunities for All

*The following NBC ministries are designed, organized, and endorsed by the Elders, in order to provide for and satisfy the needs of the flock. Each of these ministries has various opportunities for men, women, and children to both benefit from them, and serve within them. This list is not exhaustive:

Sunday Worship Service
Fellowship Groups
Bible Classes
Iron Groups • *Men & Women*
Connectivities • *Men & Women*
Retreats • *Men & Women*
Special Events • *Men & Women*
Conferences

Youth & Children’s Events
Intercessory Prayer Group
Vacation Bible School
Corporate Evangelistic Events
Visitation Ministry
Personal & Corporate Hospitality
Meal Train Ministry

Good News Mission
Facility & Grounds Maintenance
Music Ministry
Audio Visual Ministry
Nursery Ministry
Security Ministry
Freedom that Lasts Ministry
Biblical Counseling

The elders are confident that our programmatic structure is a sufficient context in which men, women and children alike can be properly ministered to and built up in Christ. We also believe these ministry outlets provide sufficient means for the saints to exercise their gifts in accordance with Scripture and serve the Lord through serving one another. Each of these ministries is designed with careful intentionality to operate in a biblical manner and on a healthy and balanced frequency.

5. Our Concern for Frequency & Balance

Though we are supportive of the above-mentioned family ministries, the elders do share a concern we sense happening in the broader Christian culture today. The issue is not necessarily with churches providing demographically divided ministries like the list above. The problem is when these ministries become too frequent and begin to overshadow the importance of the gathered assembly, and/or the family. We see a connection between demographically isolated ministries too frequently separated from the broader body, and the lack of health, strength, and unity within Christian families in our day and age. These ministries can also have a tendency to become entities unto themselves, with pseudo “pastors”, “deacons”, and “members” and can at times become unhealthy. There is an important need for wisdom and balance regarding any ministries which are designed to be demographically separated.

For example, it is good for a husband to prioritize shepherding his wife and children with God’s Word (Ephesians 5:25-27). This good command of God can be undermined when men’s ministry responsibilities are too frequent. A man consistently separated from his family for the sake of church programs is not healthy. It is good for a woman to intentionally seek her husband’s council and theological insight at home (1 Corinthians 14:35). This good command of God can be neglected when women’s Bible studies too frequently take priority over time with family. A woman pulled away from her husband and children during the week in the name of women’s ministry may not be healthy or wise depending on her situation. It is good when children’s hearts are with their parents (Malachi 4:6), and they are instructed regularly in God’s Word at home (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). This good design of God can be diluted and subverted when children/teens are in an isolated youth group too frequently. Children/teens becoming more trusting and spiritually influenced by youth leaders than their parents is unhealthy.

Though none of these ministry efforts are inherently sinful, the frequency with which they occur can often have a weakening effect on households. We believe therefore that these family ministries’ primary function ought to be pushing families together rather than pulling them apart, and we want to avoid enabling dysfunction, while strengthening healthy households in a balanced manner.

Therefore, the ministry programs we provide are intentionally limited in time, whether that be a frequency of monthly, quarterly, or seasonally. These frequencies also allow for natural on and off ramps for new people getting involved, as well as flexibility based on everyone’s season of life. We understand that not everyone is in the same phase, as some are single and/or widowed, and not everyone is in the midst of raising children. Therefore, some have greater or lesser capacity to engage in various ministry opportunities. No matter your stage of life, we encourage the members of NBC to take advantage of any church programs we provide, yet to do so with wisdom, and never to the neglect of personal devotion to Christ, the gathered assembly, or family responsibilities.

6. Pursuing a Healthy Church Culture Together

The elders of Noblesville Baptist Church earnestly pray that we would provide a healthy local church atmosphere where the people of God (men, women, and children alike) can be nurtured, strengthened, sharpened, challenged, and sanctified into maturity in Christ. We aim to provide both theological and practical instruction for the benefit of the saints through various contexts of ministry. Through these means, we hope to cultivate a biblical community of multigenerational discipleship, true Christian fellowship, and a culture of warm and loving hospitality in our church.

We love the men, women, and children of NBC, and believe the Lord has called each one to glorify him in Christlikeness. And so it is our prayer that these administrative, philosophical, and logistical ministry efforts would aid in that coming to fruition, for the flourishing of our members, the health of our families, and the glory of Christ our Lord.