

Dear Oak Mountain Church Family,

While struggling with how to come up with an introduction to this letter, I thought of the following excerpt from Reggie Joiner's book titled, *Think Orange*. Take a few minutes and read the following excerpt.

*I haven't always felt this way about parenting. In fact, there was a time when I believed that my kids would always talk to me about everything. I thought they were never going to talk to somebody else about stuff they wouldn't share with me. As parents, we think this way when our children are young because we are naïve. But inevitably it will happen. I know this because there were times when I talked to other people beyond my parents.*

*This became evident to me when my son, Reggie Paul, turned 16. We were going through a real tug-of-war and it was all connected to - you might guess - a girl he was dating. I remember that thinking somehow his years of experience with me as a father would make him pay more attention to me than to some girl he just met. But I was wrong. I couldn't compete.*

*One night when he came home past curfew I confronted him in his room. I said something that probably wasn't the wisest thing for a father to say. I don't even know why I said it. I said it perhaps because my parents said it to me. Even though I knew it hadn't worked on me back then, I thought maybe it would somehow work on Reggie Paul. I told him, "You are late coming home from a date, and I just need to know what's going on in your relationship, and I need to know now. I want you to tell me everything."*

*He looked at me and said exactly what you'd expect him to say: "No. I'm not going to tell you that."*

*Then I said, "You have to tell me; I am your father."*

*He said, "No, I'm not going to tell you because you are my father. You make the rules."*

*I was so flustered. I felt paralyzed. I didn't know what to do.*

*The next day, I showed up at Andy Stanley's office and said, "I just don't understand it. I'm trying to get my son to tell me what's going on, and he won't tell me anything." Andy thought for a second, then with his gift of mercy said to me, "Well, did you tell your father everything?"*

*The next day I went back to Reggie Paul. I said, "I talked to Andy and he said he didn't tell his father everything either, and I should understand why you won't tell me everything. I'm trying to be okay with that. But here's the question: If you won't tell me, then who will you tell?"*

*His response was easy. He said, "That's fair. I'll tell you who I'll talk to." He named someone.*

*As soon as he said the name, I felt a huge sense of relief because the person he named had been a lifelong friend of mine. I knew this friend loved our family, respected me, and had the same values that we have. This friend, one of Reggie Paul's small-group leaders, would be a safe place to go. I knew then more than ever what a gift it was for me to have this other adult in my son's life. I didn't worry about what this friend of mine would tell Reggie Paul because I knew he would be saying the same kinds of things that I would say.*

*What if the parents in your ministry were to have that conversation with their son or daughter? When they asked the question, "Who are you going to talk to?" Would the son or daughter have a name? Would it be a name the parent trusted?"*

There comes a time in all children's lives when they seem to care more about what another adult says than what we say as their parents. By creating community we are strategically placing adults in the lives of our children who will give wise direction to them while they navigate through difficult obstacles in their life. Everyone needs to be believed in by someone and everyone needs to belong somewhere. **True** community provides both. In fact whether a student remains in a faith community is tied to the number of adults who influence that person spiritually. In his research Mark Kelly observed, "More of those who stayed in church - by a margin of 46% to 28% - said five or more adults had invested time with them."

What if we are considering truth as the most important part of discipleship? We begin to think discipleship is a class or curriculum. What if discipleship is as much about being in a consistent relationship? When we as a church say we can't provide a consistent leader in the life of a child, I believe we are settling for a style of ministry that teaches truth, but not a model that disciple a life.

When you create community you do something that nothing in culture can match. It is reality that the church will never out produce culture when it comes to putting on a good show. Creating community is something we can do as a church by simply placing another consistent adult in the life of every child in our church. When we do this children know they have a place where they can have a safe and meaningful spiritual discussion with an adult who cares. When that happens, nothing can compete.

Saying this, we have anywhere from 50-70 children on an average Sunday night. Two adults cannot form **true** community with this many children. We need your help. We are asking you to pray and ask God if this is for you. Better yet, pray that God will equip you to do this and join us on Sunday nights. This is about truly partnering with families so when safe and meaningful discussion is needed, your children immediately know who to turn to. These conversations can have an eternal impact.

There will be a life group that takes place at the church with childcare provided on Wednesday nights for those who commit to help on Sunday nights. Please contact me when you heed the calling to disciple these children on Sunday nights.

Thanks in advance.

In Christ,

[Greg Bradford](#)

664.1015