

Refueling Station

How is your church helping parents who are running on empty?

BY BARRY ST. CLAIR

Almost all parents feel at times like a person who's run out of gas—they're going on empty. Desperately they look around to find "parent fuel" that fills them and gives them confidence in raising their kids.

Parents look to the church as the gas station for the parent fuel they need. But often even the best churches have little to offer. How can your church fuel parents so they can move

step toward offering the fuel your parents need.

Next, envision a refueling place for parents. Imagine your church as that place—a ministry environment that equips parents to max out their influence with their kids.

Begin by acknowledging this fact: *Parents are the No. 1 youth leaders in the world!* Parents, beyond all others, have the most dramatic personal influence on their children. George Barna confirms this truth in his book *Revolutionary Parenting*, in which he reports that an AP-MTV Youth Happiness Poll found two-thirds of 1,280 teenagers surveyed listed parents as their greatest heroes, and 47 percent of teens say that their parents have the greatest influence on their spiritual development.

However, most parents lack the fuel to max out their influence. Barna goes on to say that parents are "desperate ... parenting by default, lacking self-confidence ... turning over their parenting responsibilities to others. This crisis is seriously undermining the potential of our next generation to become spiritual champions."

Envision the solution to this dilemma by holding one hand over your head and one hand out from your side. Imagine every parent reaching with one hand to connect with God and reaching with the other hand to connect with their kids. Through parents, kids connect to God.

You can turn this vision into reality with:

- A process that focuses parents on pursuing their relationship with Jesus and on fulfilling God's parenting purpose.
- A Spirit-led experience with other parents to pray over and discuss their kids' issues.
- A set of relationship and discipleship-building tools that connects parents with their kids' hearts. (For specific direction for fueling your parents, go to parentfuel.org.)

Imagine your church's influence when the No. 1 youth leaders in the world fill up on fuel that leads their kids to follow Jesus! ■

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+ Ministry Resource

Written from decades of discipleship experience, the **Parent Fuel** (parentfuel.org) kit provides parents, churches and small-group leaders every tool necessary to equip parents to practically pursue God's parenting purpose—and change entire communities.



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down the road toward God's parenting destination?

Begin by looking candidly at the parent fuel your church provides—or doesn't provide. Ask the hard question: *Why* are your parents out of gas? Picture them on the side of the road staring at an empty tank. Could they have filled up at your gas station when they drove by?

Church leaders often complain about uncommitted parents dropping off their kids at church, yet they continue with the usual superficial fare: A yearly family sermon series. A meeting for parents to get them excited about upcoming activities. A pleading announcement for help in the children/youth ministry. A seminar on the evils of culture, music and the Internet.

What about your church? Does the pastor meet with and mentor younger generation leaders? Do youth pastors cycle through every year or two? Do younger generation volunteers relationally disciple kids? Does antagonism exist between parents and youth/children's leaders? If your church is not yet a "full-service gas station," answering these questions is the first