

World-Class Ministry Starts at Home

A very wise woman once told me that my ministry were my children. I didn't want to hear that because I liked being in the middle of ministry adventures. I love traveling, staying in nice hotels and meeting important people.

While I was working in my dream ministry position where I occasionally traveled, my daughter DÁndra was born. She has Down syndrome and needed extra attention although physically she was perfect. My unplanned surprise birth of a child with special needs turned my world upside down.

I was thrust into turmoil where I thought God forgot me and wanted to leave the church. The wise woman, Pastor Diana, took me out to lunch to find out what was going on. I shared with her about my struggle that now I wasn't doing anything worthwhile for the kingdom of God. I think I even cried through the lunch.

I'll never forget what she told me that day that literally saved me and my family. With her bright blue eyes glistening with compassion, she reached out to me and said, "Your ministry now is your family." I think I wiped away tears and said that I didn't think of my family as a ministry. I thought they were in the way of the ministry.

I was super performance-oriented and Pastor Diana opened a door to a brand new world of compassion, love, kindness and the goodness of God. I dreaded the thought of stepping down from a high profile ministry position to take care of my daughter with special needs and my sons. But that feeling of being forgotten, unworthy, and washed up as a I sat in the foyer with my daughter began to fade with the years.

I took her advice and poured my love, my faith and everything I had into my children. Don't get me wrong – I didn't have Bible studies and Bible memorization campaigns. Instead, I tried to find ways to naturally include the things of God in our everyday life.

We have lots of fun playing together and enjoying each others company. We also had moments where we talked about life, dreams and how God fits in. Through the years, God added Erin when she was 13 into our lives. My beautiful niece moved in with us from L.A. to go to school in Kansas City.

I'll never forget the summer nights where we had Haywood church. Each child was assigned a scripture and a task to either preach, pray, or sing the scripture. Those gatherings began awkwardly but soon grew into dynamic moments where God stepped into our midst.

I'm still in that season of ministering to my kids although I own a business and adjust my activities according to their needs. DÁndra is in the 6th grade, Alex is in the 10th grade, Chris is in college and Erin is married and living in Florida. Ministering to my children was a ministry that I didn't want.

But I realized that this ministry that no one prays for or claims is what attracted God to Abraham. In Genesis 18:19, there is a pattern of what caught God's attention when He picked Abraham. "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

Having the ability to teach your children how to keep the way of the Lord and do what is right and just is apparently so important to God that the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham depends on him teaching his kids. What a radical departure from what we look for in leaders today. We want the sharp, good-looking affluent guys or gals. God is looking for

someone who had the ability to pass loving and honoring Him to their children.

The ministry that no one wants in our culture is a primary ministry to God. God sees how we are able to pass on our faith to our kids and our household. He responds to that and acts to fulfill His promises when we make a priority of reaching the people in front of us with the goodness of God.

Thank you Pastor Diana for those wise words spoken years ago to a mom struggling with her place in life. Moms and dads, your first ministry are your kids. Treat this like a world-class ministry and you'll be amazed at what God does in your home.

Leilani Haywood is the editor of Spirit led Woman emagazine. Leilani and her husband, Jerome, have raised countless young adults as well as their own three kids.