



THE  
**DNA**  
OF **D6**

**BUILDING BLOCKS**  
of generational discipleship

RON HUNTER JR.

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randall house

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To the Randall House team—a family dedicated to  
“Helping Build Believers through Church and Home”  
and to our wise and supportive board of directors.

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DEUTERONOMY 6:5-7

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

# Preface

(From the Author: The leadership team at Randall House approached me in 2014 about writing this book about what God is doing in leading the D6 movement. Part of this journey would not have been possible without my friend, Matt Markins, cofounder of the D6 Conference. For six years, he and I traveled many miles together, shared blue-sky sessions, and engaged with church leaders—and we continue our friendship today. He has since gone to help lead Awana through some strategic changes. I have asked him to share this portion of the story.)

Before coming to Randall House, Ron Hunter pastored for eleven years. During the last three, he caught the vision for family ministry and left the senior pastorate. He moved to a place where he could focus solely on his passion: discipleship and family ministry. Because of his work and philosophy in local church ministry, Ron was hired at a relatively young age to replace the retiring CEO of Randall House.

His position there provided an opportunity to change the antiquated approach to discipleship held by most churches. In 2004, Ron led our Randall House team in a significant change as they worked to develop a curriculum based on the principles taught in Deuteronomy 6, placing emphasis on both church and home. Other publishers and resource providers soon followed. In 2006, he came up with the term “D6.” We spotlighted the message of Deuteronomy 6 in a way that connected with church leaders, volunteers, and parents, inspiring these audiences to a greater level of community.

In February of 2007, Ron hosted an offsite retreat for select team leaders. He invited five ministry leaders (lead pastors and youth pastors from different regions of the United States) to review and critique the effectiveness of the ministry of Randall House. This was a critical gathering as we were trying to understand some of the greatest challenges

facing the church and families. And at this gathering, the initial inspiration for the D6 Conference surfaced.

If we were going to be effective in coming alongside churches in the area of disciple making, we could not do it alone. Ron and I began to dream about developing an environment where ministry leaders and parents could gather as a like-minded community to advance the cause of disciple making and family ministry. (Ron later termed this *generational discipleship*). We envisioned this gathering to be a place where a commitment to the gospel, Scripture, and disciple making was central, but the methodological ideas could vary. An open-source platform in family ministry did not exist at that time. The goal was a generation of young people who would catapult right out of high school or college into a life of Christ-centered mission and worship. We knew this would require that these young people be surrounded by a church and family engaged in their faith formation and discipleship journey.

In the summer of 2008, we launched our marketing plan fourteen months before the first conference. As we engaged with church leaders from all over the nation, a common response was, “We’ve prayed for a conference and community like this! I’ll be there with my entire team!”

Ron and I prayed for specific items and details that had to come together. God answered each request. When criticism came and challenges arose, we were able to move forward with obedience and a deep confidence from the Holy Spirit because this was not our conference. It was not our movement. It was not our audience. It was His. We were simply God’s servants and stewards of His message: “The Lord our God is one . . . love Him . . . impress His Word on your children.”

Matt Markins

Awana

Vice President of Ministry Resources

Vice President of Marketing and Strategy





# 1 Where to Begin?

*God is the architect of the brilliant plan to capture the hearts of the generations.*<sup>1</sup> —Brian Haynes

When you walk into Starbucks, does the barista start making your favorite drink even before you order? Mine is a venti seven-pump (don't judge me) white chocolate mocha. What about your favorite ice cream flavor? Not only do I have a favorite flavor, but I have a favorite brand: Ben and Jerry's "Chunky Monkey."

It's uncanny how our brand loyalty keeps us coming back. Let's try some brand trivia and see if you can name the companies associated with the following slogans:

- "Think different"
- "The ultimate driving machine"
- "Never stop improving"
- "More saving. More doing."
- "Be your own beautiful"
- "They're grrrrreat"
- "Building believers through church and home"

In order, the answers are Apple, BMW, Lowe's, Home Depot, Vera Bradley, and Kellogg's Frosted Flakes. And that last slogan? Well, it is ours—D6.

## The DNA of D6

Each of these cultural brands discovered how to meet the needs of people in uniquely different ways. Some products have changed our culture and the way we live our lives. Remember when people could argue the facts or try to remember who starred in a certain movie? Today, instead of friendly discussions, we whip out our phones and Google—discussion over, new culture. Google made their brand into the cultural lexicon. These new cultural norms did not happen overnight, but they have completely changed our values and routines.

D6, a curriculum since 2004—a movement since 2009, is about *generational discipleship*, the new cultural term for churches who care deeply about every age and who use family ministry to accomplish new norms for their church. Shifting values and routines is not easy, but when churches see the benefits, the result is similar to paying for that amazing five-dollar cup of coffee.

*The DNA of D6* will walk you through what it takes to build a new culture that loves and values every age. Even in traditional churches, a congregation can readily adopt new and more beneficial habits. The result will be healthy children, teens, adults, and senior adults. We cannot medically change our DNA, but we can alter habits to become healthier. And churches *can* change their DNA when ministry leaders equip people for ministry rather than just do ministry.

## How to Use This Book

*The DNA of D6* provides any church with the stimulus to plan, strategize, evaluate, and refine its discipleship and more specifically its family ministry. While it is comprehensive for ministry leaders laying the foundation for an intentional generational discipleship ministry, it is also helpful for those who are further into this arena and just need some refinement. It does not matter if you have no staff, a small staff, or a large staff. The principle of this book is about the church helping the home, and any size church can do this.

This book also carries a warning: Do not read it alone. Instead, find another staff member or volunteer to read along with you so you can bounce ideas and implementation strategies as you go. Work through the chapter-ending questions and compare your responses. Better yet,

give copies of this book to your staff and/or volunteer team and meet regularly to work through the chapters together.

So—where to begin? When you open the map application on your phone, you see a blue dot representing where you are now. Once you have determined your destination, a red digital pushpin represents the goal. Download the free *DNA of D6 Generational Discipleship Assessment* to help you and your leaders determine where you are right now. After self-scoring your results, you will have identified areas for improvement that correspond to various chapters found in this book. Consider having all of your small group leaders, staff, and lead volunteers take it with you. You can find it at [d6family.com/dna](http://d6family.com/dna).

As you read, you, too, must decide what is right for your church. Never confuse program implementation with the principles to implement—the first can be almost anything, and the second never changes. In the Great Commission, the principle to implement requires sharing the gospel. But the program implementation may take many forms, such as one-on-one conversations or social media. This book will walk you through more principles and lead you just close enough to implementation or practices to discover what is best for your situation without disregarding the principles.

At the end of every chapter, you'll find a section called "D6 Connection." Here, we offer both questions to consider and resources to check out. Both will help you personalize the chapter content to your specific church and ministry situation. Just as you need the families in your church to move beyond merely reading the Bible or hearing it taught in church to studying it and applying it to their lives, you will need to go beyond a simple reading of this book. In order to build or evaluate your generational discipleship strategy, do not rush through the chapters, but read with care and make sure to take time for the D6 Connection. Once you've finished the questions, compare answers with the volunteers and/or staff members who are walking through the book alongside you.

D6 is here to help, so let's agree to work together in an endeavor ordained by God to change not only individual lives but generations yet to come.

## The Definition of Family

The context of Scripture is clear: God defines *family* as generations of dads and moms influencing their children and grandchildren. He designed and talked about the ideal home as having a dad and mom loving one or more children in the way He, our heavenly Father, loves us. He intends parents to coach their kids toward spiritual growth so they in turn will do the same for their kids.

We must recognize we do not live in an ideal society. It was never God's desire for marriages to end in divorce, and yet throughout Scripture, He used and blessed single moms. The family is not always an ideal set of parents and kids all doing what God intended. The Bible reminds of adapted models of generational discipleship. The often quoted and normal succession of teaching flows from father to son and on to grandson as seen in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is not always a godly father or mother as evidenced in Mordecai teaching his niece Esther. Or how (Titus 1:4) Paul mentored his adopted son in the faith, Titus. Notice how Timothy's faithful mother seemed to carry the whole spiritual lead of parental influence. Regardless of what season of life, God can use you to teach someone in your family or someone adopted by way of friendships and connections.

Traditional: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob

Related: Mordecai, Esther

One Parent: Eunice, Timothy

Adopted: Paul, Titus

By default and for a myriad of reasons, grandparents sometimes raise their grandchildren. The vital truth to remember is God wants the church to help shape the home—even if broken or damaged—into what He intends. When this book refers to coaching “parents,” the term may suggest a dad and mom, stepparents, a single dad, a single mom, adoptive parents, or grandparents.

## Build or Move?

I want to share a conversation I've had numerous times with those seeking a ministry position. It goes something like this:

“Hey Ron, do you know of a church that is serious about D6 and looking for a family minister?”

“If they’re serious about D6, don’t you think they already have a family minister?”

They push a little harder. “My church does not understand Deuteronomy 6, and I’m passionate about working in such an environment.”

“Well, do you consider yourself a leader or a manager?”

“A leader, why?” they shoot back.

“A leader goes in and changes the culture over time, but a manager just oversees what others have already changed,” I explain. “Maybe God is calling you to help people discover D6 and make the changes even if it takes a bit of patience and effort.”

Churches are rediscovering the revitalizing affect of implementing a D6 philosophy. While the number of D6-oriented churches is small compared to the whole population of churches, this community is rapidly growing. These churches have implemented a long-term generational discipleship strategy. Leaders help followers discover why and how by walking them through the cultural change model to take the church to a D6 culture.

Will you lead or manage? Your answer will determine if you wish to move to a church already doing D6 or take the bold step of helping establish a D6 culture in more churches.

## Urgency

The tribe who cooks over fire and remains unaware of stoves sees no need to change. Ground beef tastes pretty good until you eat a rib eye. A needle and thimble does the job until you realize a sewing machine can do so much more in a shorter time.

Compare the ones who know to the ones who do not, and the sense of urgency is as far apart as the experiences. True leaders understand that their followers often feel less urgency than they do. The church, like the classic frog in the kettle, often fails to realize how terminal its environment has become.

## The Pace of Change

Think back to when you were small and played on the merry-go-round. Do you remember pushing as fast as you could and then hopping on? How fast would it turn?

Let's say you and your best friend try pushing together. You both jump on, but you move to the middle, and your friend stays on the outside as it spins. Which one of you is traveling the fastest?

Although the merry-go-round travels at the same number of revolutions per minute, your friend is traveling faster. That's because the distance he or she must travel is greater than the distance you must travel to reach the same spot at the same time. Just think of this as sprocket science.

Or think about a NASCAR race. When two cars round the entire curve side by side, the one on the outside is going faster because it covers more distance. And just as it is scarier to be the outside car trying to keep up and on the line, your church members will always feel like they are catching up and traveling faster just to reach the place where you have already traveled in less time. For ministry leaders, it is never fast enough; for church members, well, they might need a barf bag.

Use wisdom when affecting change. Never confuse a "yes" vote in a business or leadership council meeting with everyone buying in and working toward the goal. The United States outlawed unfair treatment of African-Americans through several pieces of legislation prior to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s hard work to get people on both sides to think differently about racism. How many times have you gotten the church to vote "yes," but then no attendance or financial support follows?

Spend time with decision-makers and influencers and hold multiple conversations. Cultural change by its nature takes more time than expected. The church has ignored D6 principles for several generations, and moving back to generational discipleship will take longer than a year or two.

How long? Each church is different. It may take a year to realize the need. Each year after may bring the congregation one step closer to a cultural change that results in a healthy D6 church. Remember, it is

not about the next generation—it is about *every* generation. When you understand that statement, generational discipleship is non-negotiable.

When you and your team finish this book, you'll share a vision for developing generational gladiators who will fight for the development of the next generation. The younger one will aspire to be a part of the next older group, and you will have closed the gaps through which people depart from church and from the faith. It's time to revitalize by building believers through church and home. This is a D6 church.

The logo for "D6 Connection" features a stylized "D6" in a bold, sans-serif font, with a small square to its left. Below "D6" is the word "Connection" in a larger, bold, sans-serif font. To the left of "Connection" are three overlapping squares of varying shades of gray, arranged in a descending staircase pattern.

## D6 Connection

### Questions

The church can begin to grasp the value and advantage to a cultural change by helping its staff and volunteers discover the potential by asking certain questions. These are just the beginning steps to help multiply and share the D6 vision. The goal is to stretch the way people think so new ideas about generational discipleship will surface. Please understand that here in the beginning stage of our journey through this material, the questions are designed more to start discussions than provide definitive answers. Let the D6 discussions begin!

- What are our church families' greatest needs? (Do not focus solely on dysfunctional needs; the church needs to move from ER mindset to preventative care.)
- How can we connect parents to their kids more often?
- How can we connect grandparents to their grandkids either here or some distance?
- What are the most important tools we can give to parents?
- Which kids need to be "spiritually adopted" because their parents are absent?
- How can we connect empty-nest parents to other parents still raising kids or to kids who have uninvolved parents?
- How are the needs of parents different at various stages of parenting?

## The DNA of D6

- How does the health of marriages affect parenting skills?
- Who can you get to come spend time with your leadership team and volunteers to develop a D6 mindset?
- What conference would your whole team benefit from experiencing together?
- What three churches should our staff visit together and interact with their staff?

## Resources

*Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* by Timothy Paul Jones

*Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry: The Practical Guide to Today's Family-Based Youth Ministry* by Jim Burns and Mark DeVries

*Rethink* by Steven Wright

*Sticky Faith* by Dr. Kara E. Powell and Dr. Chap Clark

*Youth Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Five Views* by Chap Clark, Fernando Arzola Jr., Greg Stier, Ron Hunter Jr., and Brian Cosby.