

# CHURCH PLANTER'S MANUAL FOR FAMILY/CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

## **"What Do We Do With the Kids?"**

### INTRODUCTION

Church Planting – it reminds me of the year I decided to add vegetables to my flower garden. I worked hard at nurturing healthy plants, putting them in the right light, giving them nutrients and plenty of water. The result was healthy plants that I wanted and they produced lots of vegetables. That was the goal; but as the plants kept producing, I didn't know what to do with all the veggies! I had used all I needed, and the neighbors and friends didn't want any more. I ended up wasting way more than I would like to admit because my plants were so healthy. This is not a perfect analogy but when healthy church plants attract families, you may end up with more children than you know what to do with, and giving them to the 'neighbors' won't be an option!

My cousin and his wife in Minneapolis are in a group of 9 families that go to family camp with each year. I was able to attend their annual tradition of celebrating of family camp last year. It was a zoo! Those 9 couples had a total of 32 kids! So a very relevant question is for church planters is 'What do we do with the kids?', especially when there are more kids than adults?!!! So this is the question that we are going to try and answer in this portion of your boot camp today.

I can't tell you how many times I have heard this question in my 17 year role as Children's Ministries Director. And it was my job to answer that question, and implement programs for the children, as the church planned strategies to disciple the adults in the church. The most deflating question that can be asked of a mission-driven Children's Director is, "do you have babysitting for our children?" Since most people who come to Christ do so before the age of 12, the discipleship of children needs to be thought through very seriously when planting a church, especially as we ponder the reality that the children today are the church of the next generation. Whether we recognize it or not, the church of the next generation is depending on 'what we do with the kids' in today's church!

This question is not a new one. The disciples, who were acting as Jesus' 'managers', had to deal with the same issue, 'what do we do with the kids?', while Jesus was doing what they thought was clearly the 'important' work with adults. Jesus was very clear in Mark 10, and other passages as to 'what to do with the kids'. He used a very strong word to describe his response to his disciples when they tried to turn the children away – He was indignant! He left the adults and went to be with the children and their mothers. He blessed them and said, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Jesus even said we are to be like the children.

I think Jesus wants us to always be reminded of the trusting heart He had as children, and He wants us to nurture the trusting heart of our children. Jesus said in Matthew 18, that ‘whoever welcomes a little child in my name, welcomes me!’”

When it comes to answering the question, ‘what do we do with the children?’ most churches assume that the answer is replicating the programs of existing churches on a graduated or ‘as needed’ basis. Little thought has been given to taking a look at the past century, evaluating the effectiveness of those existing models.

## OBSERVATIONS OF CHILDREN’S MINISTRY PROGRAMS TODAY

Let’s begin by discussing the characteristics that define Children’s Ministries in today’s church culture. What does the typical Children’s Ministry program look like?

### **1. Children’s Directors/Pastors are staff members.**

Churches started hiring Children’s staff in the 1980’s and it became a highly recognized position on staff in the 1990’s. In 1989, our church, Bethany Evangelical Free Church, followed the pattern of the large churches in our area, and hired me part time as their Children’s Director. There were only a few churches in the Denver area with full time positions in Children’s Ministries at that time. In the mid-90’s I had a full time position. More than once I have heard church planters say that their first ‘hire’ is a Children’s director, even if they are just part time.

### **2. Quality Programming.**

Our culture has demanded quality and professional Children’s Ministry programming and many times this has been a strategy for drawing adults to church. The last 20 years, there has been a much greater emphasis on the quality of Children’s Ministries, and today we are addressing issues such as learning styles, effective teaching methods and models, attractive facilities that are ‘kid friendly’, multiple programs, and the list goes on and on. Churches experience pressure to have quality Children’s Ministry programs.

The support and training for Children’s Ministry directors and pastors has also soared. The first conference for Children’s Ministries, Children’s Pastor’s Conference, was held in Denver, Colorado, in 1980 with 35 people. CPC peaked in the late ‘90’s at close to 3000 at three conference locations. Now there are multiple conferences all over the country sponsored by Willow Creek, Saddleback, Group Publishing, North Point – Orange, and these are just scratching the surface of what is offered for Children’s Ministries staff. In the mid to late 90’s Christian colleges and seminaries were offering degrees in Children’s Ministries. We now have people with degrees in Children’s Ministries and churches will soon be looking to hire people who have this degree.

### **3. Fantastic Resources.**

The numbers of resources have at least quadrupled in the past 20 years! The number of curriculums and resources to use in Children's Ministry programming staggering and the quality is great! A lot of attention has been placed on curriculums being age appropriate, creative, with lots of activities, and they are appealing to the eye. Proven teaching techniques and learning cycles have been appropriated and often times the potential of the curriculum is not matched by the efforts of volunteers using them. And time does not allow for all the creative activities to be used each week.

The media and technology that our children have become accustom to has made churches feel the need to compete with our culture's standard. It is great when kids can have fun learning, but I have observed many churches being forced to 'up the ante' because our children are bored again and feel entitled to fun at church. The church and the parents are threatened by the 'B' word and fear that our children won't want to come to church unless it is fun, and I think we in the church have trained children and parents that they should have fun in church. I have listened to parents talk to their children when they are being picked up, and first thing the majority of parents ask is 'did you have fun today?'. Parents are afraid their children won't continue to want to be in church if it is not fun. And as a church, we have embraced this expectation, too. As a Children's Pastor, I was pressured by some of those parents whose children were bored in church to make their child like church, as if it was my responsibility that they have fun! (Actually, it is quite common to have everyone expecting to have their needs met when they come to church.)

### **4. Staffing Pressures.**

Big programs mean lots of volunteer staff! Recruiting enough people to work with the children has always been and will continue to be a challenge.

The more programs you offer the more people are needed! Recruiting is always the #1 challenge of a Children's Director. It is consistently the number one challenge for the director of Children's Ministry. My observation when I was in ministry was that there was a sense of entitlement both on the part of parents and 'non-parents'. The church has told parents that we want them to be spiritually developed on Sunday without their children while the church develop their children spiritually at the same time. So moms and dads expect and look forward to one or two hours without their children on Sunday mornings. The empty-nesters feel entitled to 'retirement' because they spent their younger years participating with their children's programs. So the only people that respond are the people with a genuine passion for teaching the children, which is what we want, but there are never enough of them!

Another challenge is that pastors do not want to use the morning service for recruiting for children's ministries or any other program. So the people do not sense the need or the vision for developing our children spiritually, as we have 'promised' our parents we would do for them. This makes the job of a Children's Ministry Director very difficult, since the safety of our children require proper adult to children ratios and the 2 adult rule has become a very important safety issue in our culture.

Teacher Rotations very common in churches in response to the recruiting problem: It is very rare to find people who will make a commitment to teach a class all year. I was blessed with a lot of these people in my ministry, but that is not usually the case. It is more common to have teacher rotations in both Sunday School and Children's Church. Research has shown that this is not at all effective in the spiritual development of children. If the church is going to be even the least bit effective in their assumed role in spiritually developing children at church, children need a consistent 'discipler' in their lives for long periods of time. Here are some of the reasons teacher rotations are not effective:

- a. Teachers cannot capitalize on the hearts and tone of the previous week and the growth that took place as a result of the teaching the previous week because they were not there.
- b. Children respond better when they know and feel safe from week to week with the same person.
- c. Many of the people who agree to be on a teaching rotation really don't want to teach and are just going through the motions without a heart for the children or the material they are teaching.

## **5. Age Segregated Program Model**

The delegation model/age segregated has been 'par for the course' and has gone unchallenged until now! The delegation model was an experiment in the late 1800's. Rob Rienow, Family Pastor at Wheaton Bible Church, has studied the history of this model, and he describes it as a new experiment of 100 years ago. He says, "the new experiment has failed, and it is time for some honesty about this fact." When I heard him say "new experiment of 100 years ago, I had to think about that, but I realize he is right that it is 'new' when you think about the fact that our faith is over 2000 years old, and it has just been the last 100 years that children have been separated for teaching on 'their level of understanding'. And when I thought even more about this, I do remember my dad telling me that he rode 8 miles on his pony every day for a week when he was a boy to go Vacation Bible School in the next town. And both my parents were in Sunday school and had Confirmation Classes that they attended. These are age segregated, 'drop off' ministries in the '20's and 30's, just like we have today;

only ours have escalated in quantity, quality and professionalism.

## IS IT ALL WORKING?

Despite the rising professionalism of and increased curriculums and resources available to Children's Ministries during the past 20 years; the best resources, training, and curriculums, research by Barna Research, Lifeway, and others are telling us that we are losing more children to the faith than any time in history. Depending on what research you read, we are losing between 75% -88% of our kids who have grown up in churches; kids who heard the Bible stories, were taught to pray, and memorized Bible verses. Take a look at some of the results of research being done:

- λ 85 % of Christian parents know that Biblically they have the primary responsibility for the spiritual development of their children. (Barna Research)
- λ less than 10% of all Christian families do any intentional teaching/devotionals at home (Barna Research)
- λ 33% (1 of 3) Evangelical Christian parents place a high priority on their children's spiritual life (Lifeway Research)
- λ 35% return in their mid 20's for varying reasons at an average of 2/month. (Lifeway Research)

### ESTIMATED PROPORTION OF EACH GENERATION REACHED FOR CHRIST

GENERATION	PERCENTAGE REACHED FOR CHRIST
λ Builders (born before 1945)	65%
λ Boomers (born between 1946—1964)	35%
λ Busters (born between 1965—1976)	15%
λ Bridgers (born between 1977—1994)	4% *

\*based on present trends among older Bridgers

(taken from *The Bridger Generation*, by Thom s. Rainer, based on Lifeway Research)

I think it is fair to say that we have a crisis on our hands! We are losing more of our children to the world than we are winning adult converts to Christ – this is the reason why the Church is in decline! We could at least be ‘holding our own’ if we could keep our children in the Faith! So it is time that we take a look at what we are doing and make some changes that result in keeping the children entrusted to us by God. Our children are people that we don’t have to go out and ‘look for’ – to bring into the Faith!

Children’s Ministries needs a change of ‘dna’ and I think it is going to begin with church plants. This is why I am so excited to work with you, the Church Planter. I believe that change is going to begin with you because church plants are in a unique position of being able to do church differently in so many ways. You don’t have to turn around a ‘big ship’ because you are in the process of ‘building the ship’! You can build the ship and point it in any direction you desire as long as you have the Biblical basis and vision for change. And I believe that this change is going to come as a relief to you in many ways because you won’t need to have the massive programming and the people needed for that structure. And I believe you will keep more of your kids in the Faith without all the programming. You will be ushering in the change needed to give our children an authentic three generation, participatory model that will better keep our kids in Faith. The important thing is that you are passionate keeping the children God has entrusted to your church in the Faith. Parents need to understand God’s design clearly laid out in Scripture from your vision casting and teaching, and everyone in your church needs to understand their role in the lives of the children.

So you are probably asking, ‘What’s the answer to our dilemma?’

We need to go back and look at God’s design for **how** the Faith is to be passed from one generation to the next.

## **BIBLICAL BASIS FOR PASSING FAITH TO THE NEXT GENERATION**

**Deuteronomy 6:1 - 9** “. . .talk about them when you sit. . .walk. . .lie down. . .”

**6:10** “. . .be careful that you do not forget the Lord. . .”

**11:2,5,7** “Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm.”

**11:18-21** (repeat of 6:4)

**Deuteronomy 31:12-13**

**Psalms 71:14-18** “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, til I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.”

**Psalms 78** “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds and the wonders he has done. . .so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born.”

**Psalm 145:4-7** “One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty. . .”

**Judges 2:10** “After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.”

**Malachi 2:15 -16** “God is seeking godly offspring.”

**SO THE QUESTION OF THE DAY IS,**

**“Who is responsible, the Parents or the Church?”**

**God gave the spiritual responsibility to Parents for passing faith to their children!**

A change of paradigm is needed! And our research is even confirming this – (what a shock – God’s principles are actually true!) Good or bad, parents are the number one influencer of their children! Based on this Biblical foundation the church has been in the wrong role for over one hundred years. “*The experiment didn’t work*” as Rob Rienow said. Parents need to view their family as their first small group! And churches need to train parents how to disciple their own children instead of assuming the role of the parents.

**A NEW STRATEGY NEEDED!**

The Church should cast vision, give Biblical instruction, train, resource, and provide administration for programs that encourage parents to model, teach and integrate their Faith into their children’s lives, thus fulfilling God’s mandate to pass Faith in Him to the next generation. So these are the questions that need to be asked and answered!

**So what is the role of the church?**

- **Vision/Biblical instruction**
- **Training**
- **Resources**
- **Administration**

**What is the role of the parents?**

To model faith in God, teach God’s story and biblical principles, and implement the principles of following Christ, making faith in God relevant to their children’s daily lives.

**What is the child’s role?**

Our children are responsible to respond in believe and obedience to God's redemptive plan. Not all of our children will do this no matter how well we raise them up in the Lord at home and church. But we as adults still have the responsibility before God to implement His plan of passing faith to the next generation.

Let's focus now on for a short time on the needs of our children.

### **WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF OUR CHILDREN?**

1. A consistent, authentic faith lived out before them. This does not mean perfection, but humility demonstrated in every day life that results in a transparent, realistic life that is dependent upon God. They need to hear, 'I was wrong.', 'I don't understand.', 'God is so good to me.' – just real life. They need to see that our hope and our joy is in God, and that He alone is worthy of our worship and praise.
2. Stories of God's faithfulness in people's lives.
3. Children need a Biblical foundation and by the preteen years, they need to begin to understand why they believe the Jesus is the "Truth".
4. Children need to be welcomed and treated like they are the Church, too.
5. They need responsibilities and to feel that they are needed in church.
6. Their faith needs to be validated and encouraged. They need times to express their feelings and give input.
7. Children need grace and patience with being kids and the 'messiness' that come with immaturity and a commitment to lead them into adulthood.
8. They need to be validated as being created uniquely by God and welcomed into our communities of faith.
9. They need the older people and the older people need to see their role in the spiritual development of the next generation.
10. They need their parents to teach them God's Truth so that it can be made relevant to their daily lives. Teachers at church cannot follow the children around all week applying the biblical Truth and principles they taught on Sunday, but if parents are the teachers – THEY CAN! And they are with their children all week long!

### **DO YOU HAVE A PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY THAT INCLUDES CHILDREN AND THE FAMILY?**

What we have been talking about so far is a new Philosophy of Ministry that includes a strategy of keeping the children that God has entrusted to us in the Faith, since the old paradigm is a strategy that has failed. This, as you know, is the first thing you must do to have a valid and effective ministry to families. So I encourage you to take a long, hard look at what I have presented and develop a Biblical Philosophy of Ministry for children and



their parents that you believe in and can live with in the church you are planting, and bring your people along with you in the process. Get them on board with keeping their children in faith. It doesn't 'just happen'! We must implement God's plan for keeping the next generation in the Faith!

The question should not be – *'what should we do with the kids'*, but how can we minister to our children in the best way - the biblical way, bringing them to spiritual maturity and then incorporating them into leadership for the church of the next generation!

### **Some Models for Family/Children's Ministries in the Worship Service**

**(starting at Kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade):**

- A. Children with parents in the worship service the entire hour with training for parents. (Deuteronomy 31:12,13)
  - a. Pros
    - Parents and their children will have the same context (frame of reference) and can discuss and apply truths the next week and for future reference.
    - Parents will not need to check in with teachers (which rarely happen anyway) to get on track with what was taught in their child's class. If there are multiple children talking to all the teachers is unrealistic.
    - Children observe their parents worshipping and will learn to worship as their parents engage in helping them to worship.
    - Children observe the Body of Christ in worship and can participate if appropriate in communion or observe baptisms.
    - Children will be curious and ask questions about worship which is a sign that they are ready to learn.
    - Children learn to listen which is a discipline (worship is a discipline that we all must learn – it is about God, not me); they absorb a lot more than what we think!
    - Children will feel more a part of the community of faith.
  - b. Cons
    - Parents who don't want to engage with children will result in a difficult experience for everyone.
    - The worship service is not geared for children. They might not want to be in the service and tell their parents they are bored since the sermon is at an adult level.
    - Children are not always quiet and this might distract the pastor and other people.

- c. To be effective you must have:
  - Pastor/leadership's support; they must lead with vision, teaching and encouragement.
  - Parent training and 'buy in'.
  - The members of the Community of Faith without children need to 'buy in' and see their role in the children's lives.
  - A Children's bulletin that correlates with the sermon is very helpful and can gauge how much children are taking in and understanding.
  - Discussion Questions for car/home.
- d. Resources:
  - *Parenting In the Pews*, by Robbie Castleman
  - *Family-Integrated Church*, J. Mark Fox
  - Literature, training cd's from Bethlehem Baptist Church's 20+ year culture of family integrated ministry, John Piper, Pastor [www.childrendesiringgod.com](http://www.childrendesiringgod.com).

B. Children with parents in the worship service until sermon. Children have their own message – same topic.

- a. Pros
  - The same message is a good way to keep the family on the same topic so they have at least some frame of reference to discuss spiritual things with their children.
  - Children will have an age appropriate 'sermon'.
  - The children are still a part of adult worship for a portion of the service.
  - Children won't be in the service to distract those people who are bothered by distractions.
- b. Cons
  - This model will take more preparation on the part of the children's teacher. Obviously, you would not have a curriculum to give to the teacher. Object lessons and examples will have to be gathered from lots of different resources each week.
  - Finding the right person/people who will put the work and effort into this type of teaching which is more involved than using a curriculum.
  - Small group leaders need to be recruited, too.
  - It is more effective for parents to hear what is being taught to their children to be able to effectively apply the principles. Parents should still talk to the teacher about what was emphasized and what examples were used in this model to be most effective.
  - Parents are not present to see their child's response to the message and might not be able to answer specific questions.

- Children need to be dismissed at the same time each week which doesn't all for 'creative worship services'.
  - Children may miss communion and baptism services.
  - c. To be effective you must have:
    - The family discussion questions for car/home should be written by the child's teacher.
    - If teaching multiple age groups is necessary, having enough people to break down into age segregated groups for discussion and application is critical. Teaching a wide range of ages is difficult and has proven to be quite ineffective without quality small groups and leaders for those groups.
  - d. Resources:
    - Object lesson, skit, and children's sermon books for help in making the sermon 'kid-friendly'.
- C. Children with parents in the worship service until sermon. Children have their own message – different topic.
- a. Pros
    - Easier preparation since there are lots of children's church curriculums to chose from.
    - Age appropriate learning.
    - Parents who don't want their kids in the service have a place to send them for Bible teaching.
  - b. Cons
    - Children's Church has proven to be relatively ineffective without parental involvement. Teachers cannot apply the principles to the children's lives during the week.
    - Recruiting issues – finding enough people who are passionate and want to miss the service to teach the children. Teaching multiple ages is very ineffective without enough people to break children down into age appropriate small groups for application and sharing time.
  - c. To be effective you must have:
    - A take home paper must be available to the parents and some sort of accountability for the parents to actually follow through with the lesson at home.
    - Parents who talk to the teacher about what was taught so the parents can continue to teach the topic through the week with practical examples in the child's life.
    - A quality large group teacher and small group leaders if you are teaching multiple ages in you class.
  - d. Resources:
    - All the curriculum companies have Children's Church materials -

Gospel Light, Cook Communications, Standard, Group. My favorite is *Kid's Church*, by Gospel Light.

- *Peacemakers* has a great 13 week kids curriculum that could be used for Children's Church.
- *Outside the Lines* is *Perspectives* for kids on world evangelism and is a great curriculum for upper elementary age kids.

D. Parents and children worship separately followed by parents joining children for worship and learning together. (This could also take place in a midweek family program.)

a. Pros

- This is a creative approach to 'getting the best of both worlds'. Kids have Sunday School during adult church, and the parents join the children to get on board with the lesson topic each week.
- Parents do not have to talk to teachers about what was being taught.
- Resource packet is available to parents for teaching at home, in the car, and family night materials are also included.

b. Cons

- There is major recruiting for Sunday School, and the joint is best done with its own staffing. It needs to be done at a high level of quality for to engage the parents. North Point has quite a production for this joint session that overwhelms a lot of churches.
- There is a tendency for only one parent to go to the joint session, and it usually will end up being mom. Both parents need to participate for this to be effective.
- Children whose parents don't come or forget to come could be very hurt.
- Resources are often given but not used by parents.

c. To be effective you must have:

- Parent participation in combined learning time. If parents do not attend the joined session you have gained nothing.
- Some kind of accountability needs to be in place for parents to attend the joint session.

d. Resources:

- Kid's Stuff, North Point Church, Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner
- Orange Conference, North Point Church
- CD available for parents containing devotions, car time, family time activities on the 'virtue of the month'.

E. Separate Children's Church program for the entire worship service.

a. Pros

- A full hour is very helpful for parents with nursery to at least Pre-K. This can be a very meaningful hour of teaching as long as parents understand that they need to carry through with re-teaching the lesson, talking about it throughout the week and making application in everyday life situations.
- A full Children's Church program for all ages is geared for kids, and if done well, all the activities will reinforce the theme of the lesson.
- Children enjoy this programming for the most part when it is done well.

b. Cons

- This is the traditional model that assumes the responsibility for the spiritual development of children instead of parents.
- Children do not experience 'adult' worship until middle school or even high school with this model. Typically kids do not like to go to 'their parents' church and it is difficult for them to transition into this format after so much fun active learning. Question: When is it easier to teach a child to worship - 13 years old or 7?
- Children do not get to know the older people in the church nor do they have the opportunity to observe their parents or other adults in their church worship God.
- Children do not feel included in the community of faith. They are only with the other children and the adults who teach them.
- Children miss out on Communion, Baptisms and testimonies of adult believers.
- There is a lot of recruiting with this model, and children do best with consistent teachers from week to week.

c. To be effective you must have:

- Take home papers and accountability in doing them.
- Good staffing of people who have a passion for ministry to children and their parents. They need to be willing to communicate with parents by asking them if they are doing the take home papers and what they are doing at home to apply the lessons to their children's every day lives.
- Strong parental involvement and communication to parents as to what is needed to do to make this model effective; which is to get involved with the teaching and knowing what is being taught and then reinforcing it during the week.

d. Resources:

*"Making Your Children's Ministry Best Hour of Every Kids Week"*  
by Sue Miller

- F. Family Night Model Parents are trained to teach their children at home – a 5 – 10 minute object lesson with other fun family night activities one night a week, twice a month, or whatever they decide. This model should be used in addition to all the other Sunday programming! If the Mormons figured out how to make family nights an integral part of their church culture, we can too!

Family Time Training materials can also be used with small groups, including children for a short object lesson, and then letting them go play while the adults have their study.

a. Pros

- The church is in the right role of equipping, training and encouraging parents to teach their children at home.
- Parents are in their God-given role of teaching their children, a critical part of their spiritual development.
- Lessons taught by parents can be applied to their kid's lives for years to come because they were the ones that taught them!
- Children LOVE fun times with their families! They will look forward to this time and respond well to dad's teaching, (unless there are unresolved issues making them angry at their parents).

b. Cons

- There aren't any; except parents may feel like they have to many activities to do this - which needs to be addressed if they want to keep their children in the Faith! Where are we 'planting' our children – in the 'desert of the world' or by 'streams of living water'? (Psalm 1)

c. To be effective you must have:

- Parent support groups are helpful for some who need accountability and to be able to plan together.
- Training available from Family Time Training, Kirk Weaver.
- Regular stories, reports and examples from parents who are experiencing spiritual growth their children's lives or their lives because of having family nights.

d. Resources:

- Family Time Training ([www.famtime.com](http://www.famtime.com))
- Heritage Builders
- Family Life has great resources for teaching children about Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. Check out their website at [www.familylife.com](http://www.familylife.com).

## How Do We Change the 'DNA'?

1. We must 'show parents how' instead of telling them 'they should' be

responsible for spiritually developing their children.

2. Mark Holman has developed a great resource for pastors. He wrote, *Building Faith At Home*, specifically for pastors and at resource called *Take It Home*, which includes a parent training for each year of a child's life. Being diligent in training our parents will result in a different 'dna'!

### **What are the benefits of putting the spiritual development back into its rightful place – the parents?**

1. Doing so promotes spiritual authenticity and growth in the adult community. Who gets more insight and spiritual growth from teaching the Bible, the student or the teacher? The teacher does – we have all experienced that as teachers! And the more we 'get' the more we will pass on to our students!
2. You will get some backlash from making this change! And you will fight the fact that there are probably a dozen churches in your area for your people to go to who will take responsibility for the kids on Sunday mornings! That is why is so important to believe in what you are doing. And Biblical teaching must be done in this area and you must cast vision so your parents believe in what they are doing, too.
3. The children will feel that they belong to the faith community. Kids I have personally talked to who are in family integrated church plants feel much more parts of the faith community than those in traditional Children's Ministry programs. The feedback I have gotten is that they still learn about the Bible, the adults treat them differently and they get to know everyone better feeling much more a part of the faith community.
4. The children won't have the challenge of transitioning into 'big church' and are more likely to understand worship and why we come to church. When children have been separated from the adult worship service until middle school or high school, many never transition. Many teens resist going to church, but still enjoy the Student Ministry programming. This has resulted in the finding that young adults today do not consider their parent's church to be 'their' church. And our young adults have trouble finding a church that feels right, because we have given everyone their own 'style of church'. I am not saying this is totally wrong to have programs that meet age appropriate needs, but if we include our young children in our worship services and teach them from a young age the meaning of worshiping God, I believe church will be a much more meaningful experience in the long run, and one that impacts their faith as adults.

**WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW AS A PASTOR IN A CHURCH PLANT ABOUT YOUR:**

## 1. NURSERY

Scriptural Principle: *Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.* Matthew 18:5

- a. Find the right person!  
Gift of administration is important, and a warm, welcoming person is important, too. This might be a challenge – you may need two people (: A team is great!
- b. Support that person with training, encouragement and recognition.
  - Books
  - Training/idea CD's
  - Conferences – Childrens Pastor's Conference ([www.incm.org](http://www.incm.org)) , Children's Ministry support groups
- c. Communicate your support and passion for the babies and young children in your church and encourage people to volunteer. John Piper is a great example of this!
- d. Budget appropriately and give attention to space needs.

Resource: *Nursery Smart Pages*, Gospel Light

## 2. SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICIES

Scriptural Principle: *It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.* Luke 17:2

1. You, as the pastor, will need to represent the realities of our society:  
(taken from Safe Place, page 6)

- “According to state Child Protective Services (CPS) agencies, more than 1 million children are victims of abuse and neglect each year.”
- One in three girls and one in five boys will be abused by the age of eighteen.
- Every 10 minutes, five children are molested = one every two to three minutes.
- Top five reasons churches may be sued:
  - 1) Negligence in screening and training workers
  - 2) Negligence in event planning
  - 3) Negligence in emergency training
  - 4) Negligence in supervision
  - 5) Negligence in communication



2. This job must be done by someone! You may have to start the process.
3. Keep records confidential and locked up.
4. It is a good idea to have everyone screened so anyone can fill in for people in the nursery.

Resource: Safe Place, Trak-1 Technology - Online Background Screening –  
(go to Volunteer Screening)

### 3. CURRICULUM

Scriptural goal: *Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 . . .so that they should set their hope in God. . .  
Psalm 78:7

What to look for in curriculum:

- God centered teaching; be careful of virtue based curriculums that teach children how they need to be ‘good for God’. We must answer the question, ‘why did God include this passage or account and what does it teach me about God?’
- Varied teaching/learning methods.
- Scope and Sequence.
- Parent connection.
- Age appropriate.
- Four –part Lessons
  1. Attention ‘getter’ which causes children to question
  2. Bible content with new information and challenges.
  3. Opportunity to participate with activities.
  4. Application oriented; discipling them in a Christian Worldview (living out their convictions).

Curriculums may need to be strengthened or ‘adjusted’ based on your goal for desired results in your teaching times.

Suggested curriculums: Discipleland

### 4. RECRUITING – HOW DO I FIND AND KEEP THE RIGHT PEOPLE?

Scriptural principle: *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest field to send out workers, therefore, into his harvest.* Luke 10:2

Key things to remember as you recruit for Children's Ministry:

- ↪ Vision recruits! Develop a mission/vision/core values/strategy statement. Know what you want to accomplish and get people on board to accomplish it! Communicate vision and needs often.
- ↪ People want to have a significant impact from the time they spend volunteering. Communicate clearly what impact they will have on children by volunteering in your program. Children's Ministries is difficult because we must be willing to 'plant seeds' with delayed gratification in most cases.
- ↪ Base your recruitment on people's spiritual gifts. Look for people with the gift of teaching, shepherding, encouragement, service/helps. But also help your people to remember that sometimes we just need to be servants and God values servant hood!
- ↪ Have a clear, detailed job description upfront with a specific time commitment.
- ↪ Take care of the volunteers once you find them. Listen for their needs and take care of those needs in a timely manner. Find creative ways to appreciate them.
- ↪ Develop a team with the goal of 'ownership' of Children's Ministries. Use this group to find others in their 'sphere of influence'.
- ↪ Look for people with a passion for teaching children. Learn to recognize the three types of volunteers:
  1. People with a passion for children. There are never enough of these people, unfortunately. **Take good care of these people!**
  2. Parents who engage in Children's Ministry for the time their children are in the program.
  3. People who serve because of the need; usually people with the gift of serving who are short term helpers.
- ↪ Training
  1. Make sure you know each person's training need as you recruit. Some people need extensive training to feel comfortable; others are experienced and seasoned. Don't insult the experienced people, but make sure your inexperienced volunteers feel secure in what they are being expected to do.
  2. Having inexperienced teaching working with a master teacher for awhile is a good way to train.
  3. *Growing A Healthy Children's Ministries* has a good section on training.
  4. *7 Laws of the Learner*, Walk Thru the Bible, is extremely good training for teachers of all levels of experience!

Resources: *Growing A Healthy Children's Ministries*, Steve Alley (section on recruiting)

*Network*, Bruce Bugbee, Don Cousins, Bill Hybels

**5. Look for a director/team leader – the key to your mental health and a good program!**

Scriptural principle: . . . *if it is leadership, let him govern diligently.* . . . Romans 12:8

What to look for. . .

1. A 'big picture' person.
2. The spiritual gift of leadership – administration is good, too, but someone with the admin gift does not necessarily have the leadership gift, too. If you can get both, that is ideal!
3. Relational people are the best in this position and make sure they work well under direction and authority.

After you find the right person. . .

1. Authority must be given with the responsibility of the position.
2. Meet with them regularly and listen to them! Children's Ministry is a tough position!
3. Have them develop policies and procedures so that they can be followed by the Children's Ministry team and the parents.

**National Council for  
Children and Family Ministries  
EFCA**

**Mission:**

The EFCA National Children & Family Ministries Council exists to help churches establish and grow effective children and family ministries that are integrated into the disciple making fabric of the church.

**Vision:**

The National Children & Family Ministries Council will powerfully influence the EFCA toward healthy Children's and Family Ministries

by encouraging, connecting, and providing resources on the national, district and local levels.

## Core Beliefs:

Children are...

- ♣ Valued by God (Matthew 19:14)
- ♣ Open to God (1 Samuel 3)
- ♣ Full participants in the body of Christ, limited only by their stage of development. (Acts 2:38, Matthew 18)

Effective Children and Family Ministries are...

- ♣ Strategic – They are commanded by God (Deuteronomy 6:6-7), essential to the health of the church and focused on the age when most people turn to Christ.
- ♣ Intentional – They must receive excellent planning and resources. (1Corinthians 14:40)
- ♣ Integrated – They partner with families, other church ministries, other churches and the EFCA.

Children's Ministers are...

- ♣ Parents/guardians, who are the primary children's ministers (Deut. 6:6-7)
- ♣ Volunteers, who do the church ministry
- ♣ Professional, who lead, equip, and support the volunteers as well as the parents/guardians

We want to...

Encourage...

Through communication and awareness of 'what's hot'

Connect...

Through networking within your district and city

## Resource...

Through the experiences and knowledge of others to help your people to find the right

The National Children and Family Ministries Council supports your church or district through the following methods...

- Phone Support – contact any one of our team to answer your ministry questions
- Email Support – Email our team members with questions you may have concerning ministering to the children and families in your church.
- Curriculum implementation and recommendations
- NextStep Resources
- Resource recommendations
- Help for churches seeking a new Children's Pastor
- Training – Our team will work with you to bring in area and/or church based training for your team.
- Networking – You're not alone! Let's talk about ways to connect with others in your district or city.

## Let us help you...

- ♣ Raise the value of Children's and Family Ministries within your church
- ♣ Partner within your district with other EFC churches and children and family leaders
- ♣ Develop a strategic plan for discipling children & families
- ♣ Provide resources for parents to confidently train their children
- ♣ Plan community events that impact families and communities
- ♣ Find creative ways to utilize facilities
- ♣ Develop communication between Children's and Family Ministry

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## Indicators of a Healthy Children's Ministry

### Core Values

#### ♣ The Bible Taught Accurately & Creatively

The Word of God is central to all the teaching within the children's ministry department. The Word is taught in fun and interesting ways that cause children to pay attention to God's life-changing message and respond by following His ways.

#### ♣ Partnership with Parents

Christian parents are recognized as the primary Christian Educators of their own children and the church has a complimentary role in this important disciple-making task.

#### ♣ Visionary Servant Leadership

Strong leaders, who have a servant attitude, should be free to lead as God directs so that ministry programs stay on focus and on the cutting edge of the Spirit's work.

#### ♣ Mission, Vision & Values Driven

Every program contributes to the vision and mission of the local church and operates within its established values – this includes all operations, policies,

and staffing.

### ♣ Gifted, Passionate and Equipped Staff

Volunteer and paid personnel are passionate to see children grow spiritually and are gifted for the role in which they serve. Staff members continue to learn how to be more effective in their ministry.

### ♣ Intentional Disciple-Making

Programs and staff are focused on leading kids through discipleship steps appropriate to their age level. Key spiritual disciplines, such as Bible memory, prayer, and devotional life are encouraged.

### ♣ Fruitful Evangelism

Outreach efforts are targeted toward the felt needs of the community. Visitors feel welcomed and comfortable. The Gospel is shared and kids are trusting Christ for their salvation.

### ♣ Lively Worshippers – Generous Givers & Enthusiastic Servants

Children actively participate in activities that declare God's honor and glory. They worship God with their lives and acts of service as well as with praise songs. Children give and serve with joy in ways appropriate for their age-level.

### ♣ Community

Christian fellowship is enjoyed among the children as well as paid and volunteer staff. Children feel safe and comfortable enough to share their joys and struggles with one another and their ministry leaders. Ministry teams are more than just task groups. They support and encourage each other. They pray for each other and celebrate one another's victories.

### ♣ Child & Family Friendly Facilities

Ministry facilities are attractive and inviting to children and their parents. They are designed with the needs of children in mind.

### ♣ Safety: Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual

Children and volunteers are ministered to in an environment that is safe physically, spiritually and emotionally in which healthy wholesome relationships can be built for the purpose of discipling children.



EFCA National Children's and Family Ministries  
Council  
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