
Student Guide

Developing Children's Ministry



Clergy Development
Church of the Nazarene
Kansas City, Missouri
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2008

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The **Modular Course of Study** is an outcome-based curriculum designed to implement the educational paradigm defined by the Breckenridge Consultations. Clergy Services is responsible for maintaining and distributing the Modular Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

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Series Foreword

A Vision for Christian Ministry: Clergy Education in the Church of the Nazarene

The chief purpose of all persons—indeed, all of the creation—is to worship, love, and serve God. God has made himself known in His deeds of creation and redemption. As the Redeemer, God has called into existence a people, the Church, who embody, celebrate, and declare His name and His ways. The life of God with His people and the world constitutes the Story of God. That story is recorded principally in the Old and New Testaments, and continues to be told by the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns as Head of His Church. The Church lives to declare the whole Story of God. This it does in many ways—in the lives of its members who are even now being transformed by Christ, through preaching, the sacraments, in oral testimony, and in mission. All members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

In God's own wisdom He calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and caring for God's people in a form that is referred to as the ordained ministry. God is the initial actor in this call, not humans. In the Church of the Nazarene we believe that God calls and that persons respond. They do not elect the Christian ministry. All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry continue to be amazed that He would call them. They should continue to be humbled and amazed by God's call. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states, "we recognize and hold that the Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry." It adds, "The church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the Lord's call" (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 400).

An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole Story of God as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His or her charge is to "tend the flock of God . . . not under compulsion, but willingly, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3, NRSV). The minister fulfills this charge under the supervision of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Such ministry can be fulfilled only after a period of careful preparation. Indeed, given the ever-changing demands placed upon the minister, "preparation" never ceases.

A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes in a distinct sense a steward of the gospel of God (Titus 1:7). A steward is one who is entrusted to care for what belongs to another. A steward may be one who takes care of another person or who manages the property of someone else. All Christians are stewards of the grace of God. But in addition, in a peculiar sense a Christian minister is a steward of the "mystery of God," which is Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah of God. In all faithfulness, the minister is called to "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19, NRSV). Like Paul, he or she must faithfully preach "the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:8-10, NRSV).

In fulfilling this commission, there is plenty of room for diligence and alertness, but no room for laziness or privilege (Titus 1:5-9). Good stewards recognize that they are

stewards only, not the owners, and that they will give an account of their stewardship to the master. Faithfulness to one's charge and to the Lord who issued it is the steward's principal passion. When properly understood, the Christian ministry should never be thought of as a "job." It is ministry—uniquely Christian ministry. No higher responsibility or joy can be known than to become a steward of the Story of God in Christ's Church. The person who embraces God's call to the ordained ministry will stand in the company of the apostles, the Early Fathers of the Church, the Reformers of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformers, and many persons around the world today who joyfully serve as stewards of the gospel of God.

Obviously, one who does not recognize, or who understands but rejects, just how complete and inclusive a minister's stewardship must be should not start down the path that leads to ordination. In a peculiar sense, a Christian minister must in all respects model the gospel of God. He or she is to "shun" the love of money. Instead, the minister must "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." He or she must "fight the good fight of the faith" and "take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called" (1 Tim 6:11-12, NRSV).

Hence, the Church of the Nazarene believes that "the minister of Christ is to be in all things a pattern to the flock—in punctuality, discretion, diligence, earnestness; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left" (2 Cor 6:6-7)" (*Manual, Church of the Nazarene*, paragraph 401.1). The minister of Christ "must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:7-9, NRSV).

In order to be a good steward of God's Story one must, among other things, give oneself to careful and systematic study, both before and after ordination. This will occur not because he or she is forced to do so, but out of a love for God and His people, the world that He is working to redeem, and out of an inescapable sense of responsibility. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the attitude one brings to preparation for the ministry reveals much about what he or she thinks of God, the gospel, and Christ's Church. The God who became incarnate in Jesus and who made a way of salvation for all gave His very best in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. In order to be a good steward, a Christian minister must respond in kind. Jesus told numerous parables about stewards who did not recognize the importance of what had been entrusted to them (Mt 21:33-44; 25:14-30; Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:35-40; 19:11-27; 20:9-18).

Preparation—one's education in all its dimensions—for ministry in Christ's Church should be pursued in full light of the responsibility before God and His people that the ministry involves. This requires that one take advantage of the best educational resources at his or her disposal.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes how large is the responsibility associated with the ordained Christian ministry and accepts it fully. Part of the way we recognize our responsibility before God is seen in the requirements we make for ordination and the practice of ministry. We believe that the call to and practice of Christian ministry is a gift, not a right or privilege. We believe that God holds a minister to the highest of

religious, moral, personal, and professional standards. We are not reluctant to expect that those standards be observed from the time of one's call until his or her death. We believe that Christian ministry should first be a form of worship. The practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a means of grace for God's people (Rom 12:1-3). One's education for ministry is also a form of worship.

The modules that comprise the Course of Study that may lead a person to candidacy for ordination have been carefully designed to prepare one for the kind of ministry we have described. Their common purpose is to provide a holistic preparation for entrance into the ordained Christian ministry. They reflect the Church's wisdom, experience, and responsibility before God. The modules show how highly the Church of the Nazarene regards the gospel, the people of God, the world for which Christ gave His life, and Christian ministry. Completing the modules will normally take three or four years. But no one should feel pressured to meet this schedule.

The careful study for which the modules call should show that before God and His Church one accepts the stewardly responsibility associated with ordained ministry.

Acknowledgments

Every module is the accumulation of effort by many people. Someone writes the original manuscript, others offer suggestions to strengthen the content and make the material more easily understood, and finally an editor formats the module for publication. This module is not different. Many people have contributed to this module.

Principal Contributor

The principal contributor for this module is Dr. Bryce Fox—Associate Professor of Christian Education and Youth Ministry at Trevecca Nazarene University.

Responders

Each module was reviewed by at least one content specialist to insure that the content did not represent a single, narrow view or opinion. The responder provided suggestions that the principal contributor could integrate into this module.

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Syllabus

Developing Children's Ministry

Educational Institution, Setting, or Educational Provider:

Location of the Course:

Course Dates:

Name of the Instructor:

Instructor's Address, Telephone, and E-mail Address:

Module Vision Statement:

Some adults are hesitant to teach children. They may lack knowledge of age appropriate methods, discipline techniques, or even Bible content. When you finish this module, you should understand the importance of children for the Church, know how to minister to and disciple children, know how to plan and implement services and activities for children, and be prepared to plan and budget for a children's ministry. Fasten your seat belt! You are ready for an adventure!

Educational Assumptions

1. The work of the Holy Spirit is essential to any process of Christian education at any level. We will consistently request and expect the Spirit's presence within and among us.
2. Christian teaching and learning is best done in the context of community (people being and working together). Community is the gift of the Spirit but may be enhanced or hindered by human effort. Communities have common values, stories, practices, and goals. Explicit effort will be invested to enhance community within the class. Group work will take place in every lesson.
3. Every adult student has knowledge and experiences to contribute to the class. We learn not only from the instructor and the reading assignments but also from each other. Each student is valued not only as a learner but also as a teacher. That is one reason that so many exercises in this course are cooperative and collaborative in nature.
4. Journaling is an ideal way to bring theory and practice together as students synthesize the principles and content of the lessons with their own experiences, preferences, and ideas.

Outcome Statements

This module contributes to the development of the following abilities as defined in the *U.S. Sourcebook for Ministerial Development*.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- CP25 Ability to prepare, organize and deliver a biblically sound basic scheme of teaching and discipleship formation using age-appropriate techniques and skill, in culturally appropriate ways
- CP26 Ability to develop and utilize existing age appropriate ministry forms by with individuals, families, and congregations may be formed into Christlikeness
- CP27 Ability to assess and implement emerging age appropriate ministry approaches to ministry in light of enduring theological (Bible, doctrine, philosophy) and contextual (history, psychology, sociological) perspectives

Course Requirements

- 1. Class attendance, attention, and participation** are especially important. Students are responsible for all assignments and in-class work. Much of the work in this course is small-group work. Cooperative, small-group work cannot be made up. That makes attendance imperative. Even if one does extra reading or writing, the values of discussion, dialogue, and learning from each other are thwarted. If one or two lessons are missed, the learning instructor will require extra work before completion can be acknowledged. If three or more classes are missed, the student will be required to repeat the whole module.

Small-Group Work. Nothing is more important in this course than small-group work and discussion. The class members will be assigned to groups of two to four students each. The group members will serve as study partners for explorations and discussion.

- 2. Assignments**

Journaling: The only on-going assignment for this module is your journal. It is to be used regularly, if not daily. On at least one occasion during the term, the instructor will check the journals. In each lesson a journal assignment is included.

The journal should become the student's friend and treasury of insights, devotions, and ideas. Here the integration of theory and practice occurs. The spiritual life nature of the journal helps guard against the course of study being merely academic as you are repeatedly called upon to apply the principles studied to your own heart and your own ministry situation.

This journal is not a diary, not a catchall. It is, rather, a guided journal or a focused journal in which the educational experience and its implications are selected for reflection and writing.

The framers of this curriculum are concerned about the way students fall into learning "about" the Bible or "about" the spiritual life rather than learning—that is, coming to know and internalize the Bible and spiritual principles. The journaling experience ensures that the "Be" component of "Be, Know, and Do" is present in the course of study. Be faithful with all journaling assignments.

Daily Work: This module has regular homework assignments. It is called daily work because even though the class may only meet once a week, the student

should be working on the module on a “daily” basis. Sometimes the homework assignments are quite heavy. The assignments are important. Even if homework is not discussed in class every session, the work is to be handed in. This gives the instructor regular information about the student’s progress in the course. The normal time for homework to be handed in is at the beginning of each class session. **All** assignments are to be completed in order for completion of this module to be acknowledged.

Course Outline and Schedule

The class will meet for 30 hours according to the following schedule:

Session Date	Session Time	
		1. The Church in the Life of the Child
		2. Children in the Life of the Church
		3. The Child in History and in the Life of the Church
		4. Children in Today’s Social Context
		5. The Spirituality of Children
		6. Understanding the Development of Children
		7. How Children Learn
		8. Spiritual Formation
		9. Interaction with Staff and Others
		10. Pastoral Care
		11. Programming of Children’s Ministries
		12. Developing a Strategic Plan, Calendar, and Ministries Budget
		13. The Church—a Safe Environment
		14. Evaluating Curriculum, Events, and Programs
		15. Storytelling, Spiritual Formation, and Biblical Interpretation
		16. Salvation of Children and Follow-up Activities
		17. Leading Children in Worship
		18. A Philosophy of Ministry
		19. Discipline and Classroom Management
		20. Ready to Minister

Course Evaluation

The instructor, the course itself, and the student's progress will be evaluated. These evaluations will be made in several ways.

The progress of students will be evaluated with an eye for enhancing the learning experience by:

1. Carefully observing the small-group work, noting the competence of reports, the balance of discussion, the quality of the relationships, the cooperation level, and the achievement of assigned tasks
2. Careful reading of homework assignments
3. Journal checks

The evaluation of the course materials and the teacher will be evaluated by frequently asking and discussing the effectiveness and relevance of a certain method, experience, story, lecture, or other activity.

Some evaluation cannot be made during the class itself. Some objectives will not be measurable for years to come. If students encounter the transforming power of God at deeper levels than ever before, learn devotional skills and practice them with discipline, and incorporate the best of this course into their own ministries, the fruit of this educational endeavor could go on for a long time. In truth, that is what we expect.

Additional Information

A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

Instructor's Availability

Good faith efforts to serve the students both in and beyond the classroom will be made.

Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration

Participating in the course of study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each course you will be required to listen to lectures, read several books, participate in discussions, write papers, and take exams. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The course work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritually formative work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head to your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work to faithfully spend time daily in your journal. Many people confess that this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling as time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, an ah-ha that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet, family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with course material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems that we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available. However, as computers become more and more an integral part of our lives, the use of a computer for journaling may take on that special bond.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your course work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration, weaving together faith development with learning. Integration

moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

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Lesson 1: The Church in the Life of the Child

Due This Lesson

None

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- Understand the importance and necessity of effective children's ministry
- Relate developmental windows of opportunity to ministry practices
- Articulate the role of the church in the lives of children

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page paper explaining why it is so important to begin in the nursery to teach age-appropriate spiritual concepts.

View either *Jesus in Me* or *Connecting a New Generation*. Both are available at <http://www.connecting.nazarene.org>

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. What is the earliest memory you have of relating to another person? How has this memory influenced you through life?

Foundations of Moral Development

Please read the following statements:

Statement A.

In the early 1900s, G. Stanley Hall (the father of the scientific study of adolescence) stated that civility and morality should be intently taught after the age of 15.

Statement B.

Many psychotherapists who work with children and caregivers believe the road to moral development begins early. "The first few months of life are very important," says Dr. Kent Hoffman of Spokane's Marycliff Institute. His research centers on attachment theory, examining the budding relationship between children and their caregivers. Humans—even newborns—have an innate need and desire to be in relationship. He said, "If a child is held and is approached with empathy, then the child will learn empathy, which is the beginning of morality. If a child does not experience empathy, then you'll get amorality [no moral sense], immorality [bad moral sense], or a very rigid and strict sense of right and wrong [legalism]."

1. Do you agree or disagree with statement A? Why?

2. Do you agree or disagree with statement B? Why?

3. Look at each phase of development listed. Tell why it *is* or *is not* a good time to *begin* modeling or teaching for moral development.
 - Infancy
 - Preschool
 - Elementary School
 - Jr. High School/Middle School
 - High School
 - Young Adulthood

Evidence of the Importance of Early Childhood Training

Under each term, write one way that understanding this area of development might influence how we minister to children.

Self-identity

Moral Development

Brain Development

Visual Development

Motor Development

Emotional Intelligence

Sound and Language Development

Musical Development

Thinking Skills

Patterns of Childhood Christian Commitment

George Barna found the following in his research:¹

- A person's moral foundations are generally in place by the age of nine.
- A person's response to the meaning and personal value of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection is usually determined before a person reaches eighteen years of age.
- In most cases, people's spiritual beliefs are irrevocably formed by the time they are preteens.
- Those who are adult church leaders usually had serious involvement in church life and training when they were young.

Lesson 2: Children in the Life of the Church

Due This Lesson

Paper
Video
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- articulate the role of the church in the lives of children
- tell why the Church of the Nazarene has a decadal emphasis on children and youth
- relate ways a local church can minister to children and youth

Homework Assignments

Write a one-page paper on how God needs to prepare you physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally to minister to children.

Rewrite the mission and vision statements in your own words.

Read Resource 2-7. Write one key point for each time period in history.

Write in your journal. Imagine how the scriptures influence your life as a minister to children:

- Picture the faces of children in good times.
- Picture the faces of children in crisis.
- Try to physically experience the weight of that challenge.

Spiritual Statistics

George Barna, in *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*,² gives us some surprising statistics.

- Of the teens surveyed, 93% claim to be Christian, but having a close relationship with God ranks as the 8th priority. Their first priority was earning a college degree. Having a high paying job, and experiencing a satisfying sex life in marriage ranked ahead of being a deeply committed Christian.
- From the teens, 70% claim to attend church, but only 16% said the church had the greatest influence on their spiritual development.
- 47% of those teens say that their parents are their greatest influence
- 9% of born-again teens believe in moral absolutes.
- Only 3% the nation's 13-year-olds have a biblical world view which serves as the foundation for their decision-making.

The patterns of adult Christian commitment from childhood experiences were:

1. Adults who attended church regularly as a child are nearly three times as likely to be attending a church today as are their peers who avoided the church during childhood.
2. Two-thirds of those who were churched as children take their own children to a church, which is double the proportion among adults who were not churched and who now take their own kids to church (33%).
3. Adults who attended church as a child are nearly 50% more likely to pray to God during a typical week than are those who did not attend church as children.

Declaration on Children

Declaration of the Board of General Superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene:

WHEREAS children and youth make up more than one-third of the world's population;

WHEREAS children and youth are being increasingly influenced by forces outside the family and church;

WHEREAS many children and youth live lives increasingly scarred by uprootedness and disruption, resulting in helplessness;

WHEREAS the Church of the Nazarene desires to become an intergenerational faith community where children and youth are loved and valued;

WHEREAS the prime age to win a person to Christ is between the ages of 4 and 14;

THEREFORE THE BOARD OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS CALLS THE CHURCH TO A DECADE OF EMPHASIS ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH—CONNECTING A NEW GENERATION.

WE HEREBY PROCLAIM JANUARY 2002 THROUGH JANUARY 2012 TO BE A DECADE FOR CONNECTING A NEW GENERATION WITHIN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE.

At the meeting of the Board of General Superintendents in December of 2007, the leaders of the church agreed that this emphasis should continue beyond 2012 and this emphasis should be a continuing part of each local church's DNA. The name of the emphasis was changed to "Connecting a New Generation—Foundation for a Lifetime."

Mission and Vision for Children's Ministry

Our Mission

- To raise awareness and appreciation of the value of children and youth in the kingdom of God. They are "disciples in training," not "disciples in waiting."
- To encourage churches to minister effectively to the whole person—physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.
- To challenge and equip church leaders to envelop children and youth fully into the life and ministry of the faith community.
- To challenge and equip parents to nurture the spiritual formation of their children and youth.

Our Vision

We envision the Church of the Nazarene as an intergenerational faith community where children and youth are loved and valued, where they are ministered to and incorporated into the Church family through a wide variety of means and methods, and where they have opportunities to minister to others in ways consistent with their ages, development, abilities, and spiritual gifts.

Goals for Children's Ministry

Read the following goals of the Decadal Emphasis. Circle those goals you feel you need to learn more about in order to effectively meet the goal in your local church.

Goal 1:

That every church will annually assess the critical issues facing the children and youth in its community.

- Be aware of what children and youth need to experience quality of life in all domains (physically, mentally, spiritually, socially, and emotionally).
- Create an assessment device to recognize the critical needs and issues of the children and youth in your community. Possible questions to include are:
 - Is this a need in our church or community?
 - What are we doing to meet this need?
 - What (more) can we do to meet this need?

Goal 2:

That churches will explore the resources available to help them minister to children and youth.

- Evaluate your current ministry to children and youth. Identify resources available to you: health and welfare, intellectual development, spiritual formation, and social issues.
- Identify district personnel with specialized knowledge in various ministry areas, such as those just identified: food programs, after school opportunities, mentoring, tutoring, or family ministry. Contact these persons for individual help.

Goal 3:

That every church will create ministries to meet the needs of children and youth.

- Research ministry ideas others are doing.
- Evaluate those ministries for meeting the needs of children and youth in your church.

Goal 4:

That every church will support and resource the family as a God-ordained structure for nurturing children and youth.

- Provide materials that highlight the scriptural teachings/understandings about children and youth, especially those that identify parents' responsibility to nurture their children and youth.
- Research sources for family ministry books and programs.
- Have a family-ministry conference sometime during the decade.
- Declare one month as "Home Improvement" month.
- Contact the denominational Family Ministries office for current resources about family life.
- Provide materials about family issues for church families. Make families aware of magazines about Christian parenting.
- Plan family-oriented activities such as:
 - Family photo event. Provide materials for families to make photo-memory books.
 - Family night of prayer
 - Family bowling tournament
 - Progressive game night
 - Cold Turkey Challenge Week. Turn off TV for a week.
 - Family Life Conference (local church or district-sponsored)
 - Pastoral sermon series

Goal 5:

That every church will help children and youth identify fully with Christ, helping them enter into a personal relationship with Him.

- Help the church see the value of children and youth.
- Provide resources such as:
 - *The Story of Jesus for Children* and the salvation booklet, *My Best Friend, Jesus* (available from the Nazarene Publishing House).
 - Follow-up materials for evangelistic events. See the "Young Believer's Discipleship Series" booklets, available from NPH.
 - Teacher training in the areas of evangelization, spiritual formation, and discipleship
 - Participation in special events for children and youth, such as Nazarene Children's Jamboree, World Quiz, and Nazarene Youth Congress
 - Emphasis on evangelism in Sunday School, programming, and church events
- Give all children and youth the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Goal 6:

That all ministries within the church will partner to integrate children and youth into the faith community.

- Share stories of how children and youth have impacted the kingdom of God: such as helping parents or others to become Christians or completing ministry projects.
- Plan service projects suitable for children and youth and their families.
- Provide stewardship materials for children and youth, and encourage stewardship among children and youth.
- Relate stories of children and youth in your area who are becoming vital agents of Kingdom work.

Goal 7:

That churches will consider ways to celebrate the significant developmental and spiritual milestones in the lives of children and youth.

- Affirm milestones and accomplishments of children and youth. Highlight events such as baby dedications/baptisms, salvation, church membership, and school events.
- Provide inexpensive awards and gifts to commemorate special milestones.

Goal 8:

That churches will disciple children and youth.

- Provide discipleship lessons and discipleship materials for children and youth.
- Help parents know how to nurture their children and youth spiritually.

Small Groups

List at least ten things the mission, vision, and goals, tell us about what the Church of the Nazarene believes the role of the church should be in the lives of children.

For example:

- In Goal 7, the suggestion is made to “provide inexpensive awards and gifts to commemorate special milestones.” This logically means that churches must plan to invest financial resources in children.
- In Goal 8, the church is asked to help parents know how to nurture their children and youth spiritually. This might mean that part of the role of the children’s minister is not limited to working with children. Children’s ministers must teach parents to understand children’s spiritual formation.

What do the videos “Connecting a New Generation” or “Jesus in Me” have to offer or tell us in relation to our mission, vision, and goals?

Children in History

Childhood in the Ancient World

Through ancient temple ruins, we know infants and children have been sacrificed, as a token of a prayer answered or to gain the favor of a pagan god. In some ancient religions, children were apparently cannibalized to ensure future fertility. Jewish scholars tell us Jehovah set His people apart from human sacrifice in the act of delivering a ram to take Issac's place. This act forever leaves God's people with the message that Israel served Jehovah, who refused the human sacrifices other cultures offered in the region at the time.³

The records show that ancient peoples in Greece, Rome, India, China, Central America, South America, North America, Egypt and Japan practiced infanticide, usually by leaving newborns exposed when families could not or did not want to raise the child. The child either died or was picked up by slave traders for profit. Most often, these infants were female or born with birth defects, presumably exposed to save them from a life of suffering. The decision to expose a child was most often made by the father or patriarch of the household, who, at least in Greco Roman culture, had the ultimate authority over whether the child would become part of the household or not.

Records from ancient Rome tell us there was grief when a chosen child died of accidental causes. However, some documents seem to indicate children with their baby teeth were viewed differently from children who survived to have their permanent teeth. The burial practices (cremation) for children over seven were the same as those for adults. Children who had not yet lost all their baby teeth were buried instead of cremated. This apparent "lower value" on young children may have been a response to the fact that only about 50% of children survived to the age of seven. Young children were seen as less than fully human.

We also have record in these ancient times of mothers who attempted to protect their children through magical spells, amulets, prayers, and even the sacrifice of their own lives. This shows mothers who placed value on individual children. Remember that the Egyptians finally "let God's people go" after the plague of the firstborn, an act that surely caused weeping in the streets. From a less emotional standpoint, this event also jeopardized their system of transfer of wealth and power from generation to generation, since the firstborn, who was being prepared as heir, was gone.

Interestingly, Romans dressed their 7- to 14-year-old children who had outlived the dangers of early childhood in the same garb as their early kings: togas with purple borders that signified these individuals were entitled to special protection. In the ancient world among many cultures, life itself was not particularly sacred, but the lives of individuals who were accepted into families were treasured and protected as the hope of the future of their families.

God impressed upon His people the concept that *all* life is precious—that the very quality of being human requires a response of stewardship and care. As with human sacrifice, God said no to the accepted practice of infanticide, establishing the value of all human life. The historian Josephus recorded that among Jews, "The Law orders all the offspring to be brought up, and forbids women either to cause abortion or to make

away with the fetus.” Similarly, the first common teachings of the New Testament church—the *Didache*—recorded the precept, “You shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born.”⁴ Clearly, God desired for His people to show respect and care for human life, even the culturally insignificant, in ways that set the Hebrews apart from common practices of the day.

Children in the Early Christian Era

Jewish traditions about children are rooted in four primary concepts:

- children are a symbol of creation
- children are the way in which a biblical heritage continues (Deut 11:18-25)
- children are a blessing
- children are a trust (Ps 127:3-5)

Perhaps we see the significance of children best in the cries of those who were barren, such as Sarah and Hannah. As a result of their beliefs about children, the Jewish people were concerned about loving care and education, in order to mold the mind and discipline the actions of the child. By AD 64, the education of boys six years old and older was mandatory among the Jews. Their education was to include memorization of scriptures, instruction in letters, some basic arithmetic, and eventually in The Law. Methods were very holistic: some texts record the tradition of the rabbis spreading honey on the stone tablets from which children learned their alphabet. The children could trace each letter and lick the honey off their fingers or “pencils,” reminding the children God’s words are sweeter than honey to the lips.

In the Early Church, we know (again through the *Didache*) that parents were admonished to teach their daughters from youth, as well as their sons. It was assumed children, who were considered part of households, would be trained within their households. While there was not a structured educational system such as the Jews had developed, older children apparently joined the classes provided for new converts. These classes were called “catechumenal schools.” There were different groups formed in these schools based upon the individual’s commitment. Those listed as “Hearers” were allowed to listen to the Scripture reading and the teaching. The “Kneelers” would often stay afterwards for prayer and further instruction. Since their commitment level was higher than that of the “Hearers,” they were frequently examined about their Christian discipline and their life habits to make sure they conformed to Scripture. The highest level was “The Chosen.” These individuals would be prepared for baptism by intense theological instruction.

Some of these catechumenal schools began to take a higher interest in those older children who were preparing for the priesthood. This meant that educational opportunities were again limited to boys and the emphasis became more academic.

Children in the Middle Ages

From this point, we are looking at the history of children in the Western world, because our primary interest is in tracing the history of children through the expansion of Christianity in order to understand how children have come to be understood in the church today.

History paints a picture of unacknowledged childhood in the Middle-Ages. Once a child was able to dress himself and act somewhat independently, he or she was expected to enter the world of the working adult. Children were dressed as adults, and they worked on family property or were apprenticed out for training. Thomas Aquinas, for example, was given over to the Benedictine monks when he was five or six years old, much as young Samuel was presented to the priest Eli in earlier days.

Schooling was reserved primarily for those who would serve the church. Aquinas, having become a learned member of the church community, influenced the church's perception of childhood as a time when the individual is not yet rational. He taught that children under the age of seven, under their parent's total authority, should not attend school or engage in adult spiritual practices such as fasting. In middle childhood, he taught, the child would grow to be able to rationally choose good over evil. Before a child given to the church might take the final vows for the priesthood, he should be allowed to choose whether to marry or enter the monastic life, whatever his parents' earlier decisions had been. While Aquinas' progression set up an early developmentalist view of childhood coming out of the Middle Ages, it also reinforced the idea that by middle childhood "children are just small adults," a concept prevalent in the era.

Children in the Renaissance

The Renaissance period followed the Middle Ages. Returning to the idea of the absolute control of the father over the family that was dominant in the Classical periods of Greece and Rome, the father was the sole determiner of when the child became an official adult through the court system. However, this did not mean that children were pampered. Children were workers in all classes. Young children were without significant identity. Until the age of six or seven, boys and girls alike were both dressed in skirts.

Education became more commonplace for children in a wider range of economic classes, and more girls were beginning to be educated, at least in the noble class. The games children played and the toys they used mimicked the vocations they were expected to choose. For example, young boys rode hobby horses and played with spears. Girls' dolls changed from the one-piece baby dolls of history to carefully jointed porcelain and papier-mâché adult dolls, crowned with human hair and dressed for court.⁵

Overall, the Renaissance was a period of progress for the concept of childhood. There were two extreme points of view on children that continue to influence our understandings of childhood today: the child as an innocent, and the child as evil under the dominating forces of original sin. Martin Luther tried to explain this in the Reformation period by teaching that sin at first lays dormant in early childhood, because children under seven have not developed the ability to have "real thoughts." Nevertheless, stealing cookies, for example, was the precursor to true acts of the sinful nature.

Up to this point in history, the church had been the primary source of education through monasteries. But when many Christians abandoned monastic life, parents who considered themselves reformers began to neglect the education of their children. Luther taught that parents who forced their children to work rather than to be educated were cheating God out of the resource of well-prepared, talented individuals

to promote the work of the gospel. Luther also taught that to love one's neighbor meant to love the closest neighbor (one's own child), and Christians must protect the welfare of children. He challenged with the question, "Indeed, for what purpose do we older folks exist, other than to care for, instruct, and bring up the young?"⁶

Children in the Age of Enlightenment

The Age of Enlightenment brought a whole new set of ideas into the world of childhood. Before this time, children had been seen primarily as little adults, John Locke proposed that children were born into the world as "blank slates" to be written on. This opened the door to the concept that children should be nurtured, molded, and shaped, and that society could hopelessly corrupt children by failing to nurture them. Some scholars have argued that there really *was* no sense of childhood until the Enlightenment.

Children had been dressed as little adults, and they used all the same household equipment as their parents. Toward the end of the 1700's, children were supplied with child-size chairs and entertained by children's stories and books. Special resources were created for children in particular. Labor was beginning to be seen as the arena of adults, while children had greater access to schooling, playtime, and "proper experience." In the poorer classes, however, child labor continued out of necessity.

The family structure during the Enlightenment began to change, too. While the multigenerational extended family homes had been common in previous years, now children were beginning to be more connected to "nuclear families," consisting of parents and their biological children under one roof. Where young children throughout history had been sent off to wet nurses who fed and cared for them, now well-to-do families were beginning to see their children as enjoyable enough to care for themselves. While apprenticeships were still common for older children, younger children performed mostly household tasks rather than paying jobs to support their families.

Those who were heavily influenced by early Protestant thinkers—such as the Puritans—were challenged by their beliefs that only the converted could enter into heaven and their belief that young children were not capable of choosing to be converted. While Catholics believed that children were brought into the church through infant baptism, and thus would be permitted into heaven, the Puritans and others like them were very fearful for the eternal fate of their children who died in infancy or before they were capable of choosing God's will for their lives. It was this conflict, in part, that drove ongoing theological development in the Protestant church.

Children in the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution changed everything. There was a growing gap between the rich and the poor, as many families moved to the cities and immigrated to new countries, further defining the family as parents and children, separate from earlier generations. Children became essential members of the working class, with factories depending on them for labor. For example, children as young as four to five-years of age were hired to pick up loose cotton that fell to the floor in textile mills. Orphan children were sometimes sent to manufacturing centers as little more than slaves. Of course, children of the factory owners began to live more protected lives, enjoying the

fruits of their parent's labors, and attending public or church-supported schools. Class differences are most apparent for children in this era.

The church recognized these abuses and intervened with charity homes and schools. In fact, Sunday School was started in 1780 in England by Robert Raikes, a contemporary of John Wesley. The purpose was to teach skills for reading and writing to poor child laborers and give them moral instruction on Sunday, their only day off. Raikes was not a pastor; he was a newspaper man. That gave him the advantage of being able to "write his own press," and his Sunday Schools gained much attention as a tool for social reform. It also established Sunday School as a ministry of the laity, a tradition that continues to this day.

John Wesley, the father of the Methodist movement, established boarding schools for children, though he had no children of his own. Most of his theories of childhood and child rearing seem to come from his mother, Susannah Wesley, who raised ten children, emphasizing academic teaching for both her sons and her daughters.

Wesley recognized the strong will present in childhood, and much of his philosophy of discipline focused on the need for the child's will to be broken in preparation for obedience to God later. While Wesley was strict and did not understand the significance of play in the life of a child, he did have a great respect for the importance of childhood teaching and for children as people. Wesley had greater confidence in the ability of young children to be in relationship to God than those who had earlier declared that children under the age of seven did not have the reasoning capacity to choose good over wrong.

His journals record several accounts of children under the age of six having "assurance of faith." In one entry, Wesley, in referring to revivals, stated, "God begins his work in children."⁷ Through Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace, heirs of Wesley believe children who die before rejecting God's gift of salvation will be saved by God's grace, taking away the fear for an innocent child's eternal destiny, while still leaving in place the need for a child's conversion in response to God's call on his or her life. Wesley in his practical theology urged that children be ministered to, and insisted that his Methodist pastors spend time with children regularly, whether they felt gifted for this ministry or not.

In the mid- to late-1800's, in reaction to the pressures for conversion in the revivalist environment in America, Horrace Bushnell introduced the concept of nurture as a path to Christian commitment rather than discipline emphasizing the sinful nature and need for a crisis conversion. Bushnell proposed that the children of committed Christian parents might never be aware of a time in their lives when they were not part of God's family. Children, he implied, never needed to experience a conversion experience if they had been raised to think about and live in the ways of the Lord. Relationship with God would be a natural outcome of their lives. Bushnell had strong influence in the non-Revivalist churches into the 20th century. His nurture-based religious education principles are still present in modern Christian education practices.

Children in the Modern Era

As politicians and pastors and laity began to defend the rights of children in the Western world, literacy became a primary concern. Mandatory public schooling for all children, including the mentally and physically challenged, gradually became the norm throughout Westernized countries. The care and education of children became a

significant public policy issue, and minimum standards of education and protection were established. The role of the child changed from being “seen and not heard” to being front and center by the end of the 20th century as the “baby on board” generation was welcomed by their parents. As far as the theological understanding of children goes, by 2003, 73% of Americans believed that children are born good and are corrupted by experience rather than by nature.⁸

How did this change happen? Some link the change to the development of psychological understanding and the significance of childhood experience on adult health and happiness, as well as a better understanding of what can happen when things go wrong. Others point to economic factors, particularly those which allowed women to pursue homemaking as their primary task, elevating the care of children and homemaking to full-time occupational status. Still others point to sociological and technological factors that reduced infant mortality and allowed people for the first time in history to effectively plan for pregnancy and medically intervene in cases of infertility. Some have even claimed that this is the age of the “too precious” child,⁹ who leads the parents rather than being guided and directed toward maturity by their parents. Yet on the other hand, documented cases of child abuse have never been higher. The understanding of childhood is very dependent on which children are being observed.

Early in the 20th century, the model for good parenting and good schooling was based on the factory model of efficiency. Parenting specialists encouraged feeding by the clock, attending to a child on a routine, and conditioning a child not to cry or disturb adult patterns in the household. Schools were run “by the bell,” and scientific methods (like intelligence testing) were employed to determine which children could succeed and which could not. Children were grouped for instruction by ability levels to maximize efficient instruction. When other scientific methodology began to prove that these non-relational strategies were not accomplishing the outcome of well-adjusted adults, alternative methods of child-rearing and education were proposed.

The pendulum swung to “permissive parenting” near the middle of the century during which much of the focus of the discipline and training of the child moved to the school and church settings. Yet many of the tools of the household of previous years were banned from the public setting, many rightfully so. States outlawed corporal punishment in the schools, and states began to take a strong interest in preventing abusive discipline in the home. New, more child-sensitive, discipline techniques were developed for both the public and the home setting. Spanking was replaced by time-out or grounding, and the use of inappropriate disciplinary techniques led to both private criticism and to public prosecution.

As in all generations, there have been variances in how effective different methods of child-raising are in raising children who sustain the values of their culture and become productive members of their society. It’s not at all uncommon to hear, “What’s the matter with kids these days!?” But then, some variation of that question has been present throughout the course of history, beginning with Adam and Eve, who were not strangers to the same issues that plague our society today.

Best practice models of ministry to children have moved from expecting children in the church setting to primarily be listeners, observers, and sometimes program performers to being actively involved learners and participants in age-graded ministries of the church. Recently, however, the church has begun to wonder if we are missing something by segregating our churches into “age ghettos” that limit the

exposure of one generation to another. We'll talk more about how culture is affecting children today and how children affect today's culture as well, in a future session.

The important thing to remember about the modern era of childhood is that children have become more of a topic of interest than at any time in history up to this point. Children are no longer ancillary or tag-on members of society—just small people on their way to adulthood. Childhood is a period of development that is understood to be an important part of society's interest. Today, children matter. Of course, to God, they have always mattered. Our job as the church is to translate God's care into ministry practice.

Lesson 3: The Child in History and in the Life of the Church

Due This Lesson

Paper
Mission and vision statements
Reading Resource 2-7
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- identify key thoughts about children in historical context, especially as related to the history of the church
 - appreciate important biblical passages and stories that contribute to theological understandings about children
 - relate biblical and theological understandings to the role of children in the church
 - understand how our biblical and theological understandings influence our ministry to children

Homework Assignments

Complete Resource 3-6.

Watch an hour of children's commercial television programming (not PBS) and complete Resource 3-7.

Complete Resource 3-8.

Read Resource 3-9.

Read Resource 3-10.

In your journal, write about one of the following:

- What do you remember thinking about God as a child? What about Jesus? What about the Holy Spirit?
- What do you think adults thought about children when you were a child? Did you feel as though adults understood you well? Were there any adults who seemed to think differently about children?

Children in the Old Testament

Children included in Community

- Deuteronomy 16:13-15
- Joshua 8:30-35
- 2 Chronicles 20
- Nehemiah 12:43

Old Testament Children

- Ishmael (Gen 21)
- Joseph (Gen 37)
- Miriam (Ex 2)
- Samuel (1 Sam 3)
- David (1 Sam 17)
- Naaman's slave girl (2 Kings 5)
- Josiah (2 Chr 34)
- Daniel (Dan 1)

Six Main Ways Jesus Underscores the Significance of Children

By Judith Gundry-Volf¹⁰

1. He blessed the children brought to Him.
2. He taught the kingdom of God belongs to children.
3. He made children models of entering the kingdom of God.
4. He made children models of greatness in the kingdom of God.
5. He called His disciples to welcome little children as He does, and He turned the service of children into a sign of greatness in the kingdom of God.
6. He gave the service of children ultimate significance as a way of receiving himself and the One who sent Him.

Small Groups

Match the Bible verses to the concepts identified by Gundry-Volf in Resource 3-2.
NOTE: There may be more than one concept that is applicable to each verse.

- Matthew 18:1-5
- Matthew 19:13-15
- Matthew 21:14-16
- Mark 9:33-37
- Mark 10:13-16
- Luke 18:15-17

What concepts in these Scripture passages would you add to Gundry-Volf's list?

What attitudes toward ministry to children do you see flowing from these teachings of Jesus about children?

Biblical Truths

- We are created in the image of God with physical bodies, and we resemble God in our creativity, ability to know, feel, choose, and relate to others (Gen 1:27).
- We are created to take responsibility for God’s world and all that is in it, especially our first blessing—children (Gen 1:28).
- We are separated from God by sin (Ps 51:5; Rom 3:23; 5:12).
- God desires that all people come to Him for forgiveness of sin (Jn 3:16; 2 Pet 3:9), transformation, and restoration of the image of God (Jn 3:3; Rom 12:2).
- We have dignity as God’s beloved creation, even though we are sinners (Rom 5:8).
- Because of Christ, we have equality with one another (Gal 3:28).

Scripture also acknowledges these facts about children:

- They are not mature, but have reasoning ability characteristic of childhood (1 Cor 13:11).
- Children are changing rapidly due to many kinds of input (Eph 4:14).
- Children will ask questions and need explanations (Ex 12:26; 13:8).
- Adults are responsible for training children (Deut 6, Prov 22:6).
- Children are under the authority and protection of parents (Ex 20:12; Eph 6:1-4).
- God expects special provision for children who don’t have parents to care for them (Deut 10:18; 24:19; Jam 1:27).
- Children need correction (Prov 23:13; 29:15).

Connecting Theological Insights to Children's Ministry

1. What we believe about children and childhood
2. What we believe about how God sees children
3. What we believe God wants us to do in relation to the children He has entrusted to us

Children and the Media

Watch one hour of children's programming on commercial television (not PBS). As you watch, observe and record the following:

Title, day, and time of the program(s):

1.

2.

What appears to be the theme of each program?

What are the conflicts in each program?

What moral reasoning do you see used by the characters?

What is good about each program?

What is bad about each program?

Record the topic of each commercial, along with its start and finish time.

What habits or attitudes are the commercials promoting through the images?

What connections do the commercials have to the programs?

What attitudes about children do you see evidenced in this experience?

What messages do you feel a child who watched this hour of TV would get?

Culture Watching

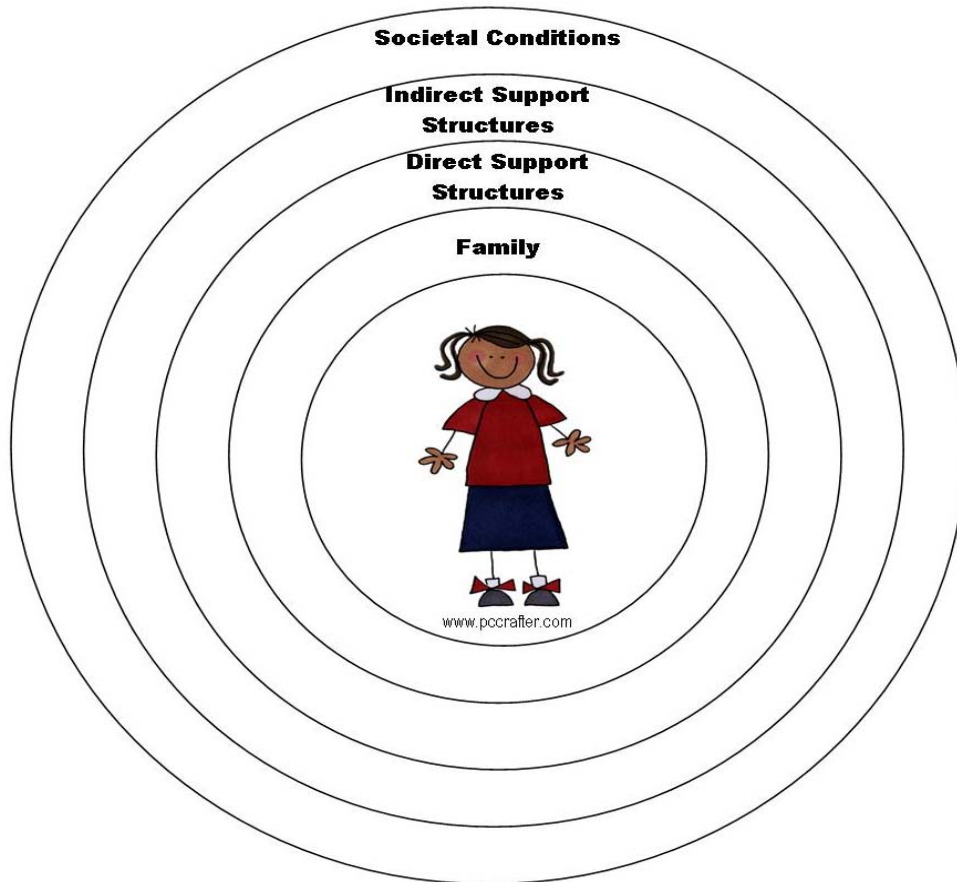
Answer the following questions honestly to find out how well you understand today's culture.

<i>When was the last time you did the following to better understand the children you are working with?</i>	Within the last week	Within the last month	Within the last year	You've got to be kidding!!
Read current research in parenting, teaching, or a popular magazine?				
Read the community bulletin board to know what services and programs are being offered to the kids in your community?				
Read the background information for teachers in your teacher's guide?				
Looked at picture books?				
Looked at text books or teaching materials for younger children?				
Visited the children's section at the library or a bookstore?				
Played a video game?				
Went to an arcade?				
Ate in the play area of a fast-food restaurant?				
Observed or participated in a public school classroom?				
Used the play equipment at a public park?				
Intentionally watched the interactions of children in unstructured situations (when there is not an adult directing their activity)?				
Searched the Internet for children's sites?				
Visited a toy store?				
Looked at the videos for rent in the children's section of the local video store?				

<i>Spent individual time with a child and asked some form of any of the following questions?</i>				
What's the hottest toy at your school?				
Why do you think so many kids want/like [something you've noted children are interested in]?				
What do you think most kids don't like?				
What movie or television show do you think I should see? Why?				
If you could pick anything to do at a party, what would it be?				
What do you think is most important to your friends?				
Who are your friends' heroes?				
What's the last fun thing you did with your family?				
What do you like most about church?				
What do you like least about church?				

The Big Picture Influences on Children

A Model of Children's Context¹¹



The Child's Self Image

The factors in the innermost ring are the most directly influential in the child's life. They also are the factors that tend to cause the most long-lasting effects in a child's life because they influence children's perceptions of how the world operates.

A well known poem reminds us of the importance of establishing a healthy environment for children. The poem is worth repeating here:

Children Learn What They Live¹²

by Dorothy Law Nolte, Ph.D.

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.

If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

Family

The child's immediate context, or inner ring, is his or her family. Children can be well connected or poorly connected to their families. Families have personalities that are a result of the people in them, their histories, and the way they respond to their circumstances.

Some internal characteristics of **healthy families**:

- Have good communication skills.
- Show the ability to manage their resources effectively.
- Share responsibilities among members.
- Know how to utilize support systems.
- Respect each other's skills, talents, and limits.
- Have clear and reasonable boundaries.
- Contribute to a larger community.
- Enjoy spending time together.
- Share religious and moral values.
- Commit to each individual's personal growth.

Some internal factors of **challenged families**:

- Unresolved anger and unwillingness to forgive.
- Unresolved childhood issues among adults.
- Mental illness.
- Divorce.
- Domestic violence.
- Stress.
- Shortage of resources (time, money, or necessary goods).
- Death or illness of a member.
- Over-controlling or uncommitted members.
- Addictive behaviors.

Direct Support Structures

The next ring around the child consists of the factors outside the home and family with which a child directly interacts. This would include schools, churches, sports clubs, community centers, medical clinics, scout groups, and sometimes social service agencies. This ring is all about direct support interactions. How these agencies interact

with the family and support the positives goals of the family determines the health of the influences in this ring.

Occasionally, representatives of this ring will actually move into the inner ring of a child's life. For example, a Sunday School teacher might take a direct role in the child's day-to-day life as a childcare provider. For the most part, members of the second ring provide temporary resources or part-time resources. They have an interest in a particular aspect of a child's life. Schools are primarily concerned with academic development, medical services with a child's physical wellbeing, sports clubs with social development, and churches with spiritual formation. Because children are not fragmented beings, each of these influential forces may serve overlapping purposes in a child's life.

These entities are pulled into a cohesive background for a child's development under the oversight of parents. In the best of circumstances, the family uses this circle as a network to support their efforts to provide the best care and upbringing for their children. Families choose support sources that are consistent with their parenting goals.

Sometimes, when parents are unable to provide for the needs of a child, members of this ring step in to take a more active daily role. In a worst case scenario, these supportive institutions may take over the responsibilities of a neglectful parent in the child's life, as in the case of foster placement. Sometimes, parents do not recognize the significance of their own influence in their child's spiritual formation, and they turn over a child's spiritual nurture to the church. Parents may expect the school to make learners out of their children.

Even when these support resources take on the functional tasks of a family, they can never replace a child's birth family, nor can they completely take away the influence of the child's original "inner circle." So the main characteristic of this ring of the child's life is that the people or agencies are those that a child has direct, personal contact with on a regular basis, but the agencies are not part of the child's family circle.

Indirect Support Structures

The next ring shows influences on the child with which the child has no direct contact. For example, a child has little or no contact with a parent's work context. However, the work context influences the parent and has a trickle-down effect on the child. If Dad's wages are low, it will influence the child's economic status. If Mom's employer values and affirms family relationships, her child may benefit from the employer's policies about family medical leave. Similarly, a child will never have contact with insurance company personnel, but that company's policies can determine the type of medical care a child does or does not receive. A child may have no direct contact with a property management firm, but the child's housing conditions are influenced by the action or inaction of the home's owner.

Societal Conditions

The outside ring represents the systems that are the farthest from contact with the child, but they still influence the daily lives of children and families. These are the characteristics or forces of the greater culture such as the economy, war, postmodern philosophy, the marriage debate, media standards, literacy rate, political leadership,

and globalization. While a child may never recognize the power of these influences, children's lives are nonetheless affected for good or bad by these forces that impact the big picture, both in the present and future.

This nesting approach to development helps us see that every child is a uniquely forming individual, while conditions in the family, community, and even the world are constantly forming and shaping the child's life experience in ways that will influence that child's individuality. Incidentally, this also helps us to understand how generations of individuals in a culture may share characteristics or defining traits that are significantly different from those of their parents.

Child Abuse

Sexual abuse is any contact with a child that is intended for sexual arousal. The abusive behavior ranges from exposure of the adult or child, to touching that is intended for sexual stimulation of either the adult or child (or another person in the case of photographing or otherwise recording the encounter).

The <www.Safechild.org> website reports research that indicates one in four girls and one in ten boys will be abused by the age of 18. Ten percent of this abuse occurs when the child is a preschooler. Some researchers believe this figure is low because of underreporting. The perpetrator is *almost always someone the child knows*, and about one-third of the time, the perpetrator is a family member. Because child sexual abuse usually does not involve other physical violence, there are few readily observable physical indicators that the abuse has occurred.

There is not always definitive physical evidence of sexual abuse. Resource 4-1 indicates behavioral characteristics that may indicate a child has been sexually abused. It is important to recognize that any of these behaviors may occur for any number of reasons, but any combination of these behaviors, particularly if they occur suddenly, should be investigated to determine if there is reason to suspect sexual abuse. Pastors have both a moral and legal obligation to report suspected sexual abuse to their local authorities for investigation where there is any lingering concern that a child has been abused. This is not a matter of personal choice. It is a matter of moral and legal responsibility.

Resource 4-2 is included to help build your awareness of situations that compromise children's safety. While none of us want to think about threats to children occurring within our churches, sexual predators have used the church for access to children. This can include pastoral staff, Sunday School teachers, and other children's ministry volunteers. Sexual predators are also hurting individuals who may seek Christ's healing in the church. Sheltering children from predators is in the best interest of both the child and the offender, as well as the cause of Christ.

If you are aware of parents or members of your volunteer staff who have been abused, or if you yourself have suffered sexual abuse, it is most important to seek your own healing before seeking to help children. Healing is a lifelong process, and there is no shame in being on a healing journey. No child is ever responsible for his or her own abuse. *The adult is always in a position of power and is without exception the responsible party.* Healing requires great courage. Those who are not willing to engage in the healing journey will find unresolved issues creating painful situations for themselves and others. Unfortunately, the abused who refuse to engage in healing are more likely to become abusers themselves, in spite of the pain the abuse has caused in their own lives.

Physical abuse is defined as physical injury to a child as the *result of an intentional act*. This definition is critical as it helps us understand that physical abuse can be perpetrated unintentionally by an intentional act. Most people do not intend to injure a child, but the direct result of their intentional act is injurious to someone who is smaller and /or less powerful.

As in the case of sexual abuse, *the child is never responsible for the abuse*. No matter how a child behaves, the adult in authority is morally and legally responsible to protect the child from harm. Harm includes bruising, welting, burning or freezing, breaking skin, depriving of air, pulling hair, breaking bones or twisting limbs, or causing internal injuries of any kind. Physically degrading acts, such as tying or binding a child, locking in a dark or unsafe place, or forcing a child to stand or sit in an uncomfortable position can also be considered physical abuse. In general, any physical act that has harmful results, or any nonphysical act that causes harmful physical consequences can be considered abusive.

The children's minister is legally obligated to report suspected physical abuse to the appropriate authorities for investigation in the same way he or she is responsible to report sexual abuse.

Abusive patterns in a family often escalate with stress and can become life-threatening. Abusive behavior is often the result of an adult who feels out of control and unable to manage the challenges of his or her life in a non-violent manner. While we may sympathize with a parent who is suffering from stress and a lack of adequate lifeskills, our responsibility is to protect children when their families cannot or do not choose to do so.

The best way to prevent child abuse is to help parents obtain the resources they need to properly care for their children.

These resources include:

- A right relationship with God.
- Anger management skills.
- A broad variety of disciplinary strategies.
- Support for healthy parenting.
- Appropriate expectations for children at each developmental level.
- Material needs.
- A healthy sense of themselves and their strengths for parenting.
- Companionship in the parenting process.
- Time to pursue ongoing personal growth opportunities.

Resource 4-3 lists some behaviors that may indicate a child is being physically abused. As with the resource for sexual abuse, the behaviors listed may or may not indicate a child is being abused, but any combination of the behaviors observed consistently merits further exploration of the circumstances that contribute to the behaviors.

A word about spanking: There is probably no more highly debatable topic among Christian parents than, "Should I spank my child?" Many refer to references in the book of Proverbs (specifically 23:13-14) that has been misinterpreted to indicate the rod of correction is to be used as a tool for striking, rather than a tool for discipline. Clearly, punishment is not to result in the child's endangerment.

No Christian parent should ever consider a punishment of the severity that it could jeopardize their ability to continue parenting the child God has given to them to raise. The emphatic key point of the Scripture is on the need for correction of the child as part of the learning process and not on the degree of physical pain that should or should not be inflicted to accomplish that goal.

A children's minister or volunteer should never physically punish a child under any circumstances. We'll discuss discipline strategies later in the course.

Emotional abuse may be a newer term to some people. Most of us are aware of times we have been hurt emotionally, and we don't have a single scar to show for it. There is no universal definition for emotional child abuse, but it is generally considered to be acts of commission or omission (things that are done or left undone) by parents and other caregivers that could cause the child to have serious behavioral, emotional, or mental disorders (source www.medterms.com, accessed July 2006). This would include deliberate attempts to shame, degrade, manipulatively scare a child to discourage a behavior, or a failure to address or withdrawal of attention to developmental needs for nurture and affection as a means of punishment. A great deal of emotional abuse is unintentional. It is the result of a lack of understanding of the power of words to harm or form a child.

Paul's words of advice to the Philippians were: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8). This verse provides an appropriate framework for our communication with children.

Children thrive in an atmosphere where positive behaviors are modeled and affirmed and where they are allowed to fail and to correct their mistakes based on a better model. An emotionally sound environment focuses on development of character and maturity, correction of inappropriate behavior, and affirmation of a child's value in the eyes of the Creator and those who care about him or her. Actions and words that undermine or threaten any of those important goals might be considered emotionally abusive.

Spiritual abuse of children generally happens as an outgrowth of emotional abuse, when we attribute to God any of the behaviors listed above. We may think that "spiritual abuse" is a pretty strong term, but Jesus had some pretty strong words for people who interfered with children's spiritual walk. In Matthew 18:6 (NASB) we read, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea."

From that scripture, we can define spiritual abuse as anything that causes a little one to stumble, sin, fall away from their relationship with God, or be spiritually offended.

Sometimes attempts to make God real to children in a simple way lapses into spiritual abuse, with comments such as: "God doesn't like bad boys/girls." "God won't like it if you (do something perfectly natural for a child to do)." "If you're not good, God will (fill in the blank)."

It is far wiser to focus on what DOES please God rather than what DOESN'T please God. In this way, children learn to respond to God out of love rather than out of fear. They still really want to please those who love and accept them and avoid those who scare them. Perhaps that's why Matthew tells us how Jesus welcomed the children. No passage of Scripture tells us that Jesus criticized or threatened children with the punishments about which He warned religious leaders.

Another spiritually abusive practice is to attempt to bribe, coerce, or shame a child to respond to Christ's free gift of salvation.

Sometimes we unintentionally undermine the significance of children's experiences with God, assuming that they are too young to understand His ways, or we discount questions about God that are very significant to a child's spiritual development. Dr. Cathy Stonehouse, in her book, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey* says, "Ignoring their questions deprives children of the concrete understandings we could offer and leaves them with some imaginary pieces that could have been replaced with better, more assuring images."

We can also put a child off-track when we laugh at a child, or we communicate to them their ideas about God or spiritual things are "cute." Robert Coles, in his book *The Spiritual Lives of Children*,¹³ tells about one child's hesitancy to talk with her teacher about her understanding of God,

"If I told her, she'd give me 'that smile.' "

"What smile?"

"The smile that says to us 'You kids are cute, but you're dumb, you're different and you're all wrong.' "

Children certainly are cute, and sometimes what they say is humorous from our perspective. But we must be very careful to respect their relationship with God and laugh with children and never at them.

Neglect is failing to provide for a child's basic needs in any area of development. It also includes a lack of supervision or abandonment, leaving a child in a place that is not safe, not adequately providing for a safe living environment, proper health care, nutrition, clothing, and education, or not seeking the special services necessary for a child to thrive. Neglect is subject to personal judgment, and it is defined differently in different legal systems.

Indicators of neglect include begging or stealing food, constantly being unwashed, hungry or inappropriately dressed, being constantly tired or listless, having unattended physical problems, being exploited or overworked, being unsupervised for extended periods of time, skipping or missing school frequently.

Sometimes, neglect is the natural outgrowth of poverty. At other times, it is a consequence of addictive behaviors or mental illness in the family. Increasingly, we are confronted by differences in cultural expectations for the care of children. Before making judgments about whether a child is being neglected, it is important to notice if the treatment is resulting in the child failing to thrive. The church can be most helpful in cases of neglect that do not involve abuse by helping to provide assistance and networking to meet the tangible needs of the child.

This is by no means a comprehensive list of all the challenges a child may face on a daily basis. However, many of the challenges a child faces will fall into one of these categories. For many children, these are the realities of their lives. They will come to church with smiles on their faces, but they are dead on the inside because of what they are experiencing in their homes. You have to be willing to get close enough to your children to sense their pain and to be trusted enough to help.

Lesson 4: Children in Today's Social Context

Due This Lesson

Complete Resource 3-6
Complete Resource 3-7
Complete Resource 3-8
Read Resource 3-9
Read Resource 3-10
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- identify characteristics and challenges of a child's layers of social context
 - map a strategy for understanding an individual child's culture
 - consider effective ways the children's minister can address the child's needs in cultural context

Homework Assignments

Do two of the activities from Resource 3-8 that you know you need to be more familiar with. Include a child with one of the activities. Write a one-page paper about what you learned and experienced. Include in the paper your plan to incorporate some activities into your schedule each week.

Complete Resource 4-6.

Read Resource 4-7.

Read Resource 4-8.

Read Resource 4-9.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section on what you learned about a child's culture and the appropriate response of a children's pastor.

Behaviors That May Indicate Sexual Abuse

Children often do not tell us with words they have been sexually abused or have successfully resisted an assault and don't know quite what to do next. There are many reasons children might hesitate or be afraid to tell us about what has happened, including their relationship to the offender, fear of the consequences, retaliation, or uncertainty about whether or not they will be believed.

Any one or more of the following signs could indicate there has been a sexual assault, or it could be indicative of another problem. Whatever has caused the change in behavior should be explored.

- Sudden reluctance to go someplace or be with someone
- Inappropriate displays of affection
- Indiscriminate affection-seeking behavior
- Sexual acting out with other children, adults, or toys
- Age-inappropriate sexually-explicit drawings
- Sudden use of sexual terms or new names for body parts
- Being uncomfortable with or rejecting typical family affection
- Sleep problems, including: insomnia, nightmares, refusal to sleep alone or suddenly insisting on a night light
- Regressive behaviors, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, infantile behaviors, or other signs of dependency
- Extreme clinginess or other signs of fearfulness
- A sudden change in personality
- Problems in school
- Refusal to participate in or change clothing for gym class at school
- Running away from home
- Bizarre or unusual sophistication pertaining to sexual behavior or knowledge, including sexual acting out
- Reports sexual assault by parent or guardian

NOTE: Any one of the signs could indicate there has been a sexual assault, or it could be indicative of another problem. Whatever has caused the change in behavior should be explored.

Source: adapted from <http://www.safechild.org/childabuse1.htm> Accessed July, 2006.

Tricks Used by Sexual Predators

The following list of tricks used by sexual predators has been identified by Laura Ahearn, founder of Parents for Megan's Law. It is available from www.parentsformeganslaw.com. These activities have been used to trick children into abusive relationships. Knowing this can help us protect children and help us understand the suspicion parents may have in regard to children's pastors and other adults with whom their children interact.

The Apple of My Eye Trick

This trick is the most insidious of all tricks. Predators use the same innocent vulnerability we strive to protect in our children for purposes of methodically gaining their trust. Predators give special attention to children so they can eventually sexually abuse them. All children want love, attention and affection. This is why children are particularly vulnerable to those who are experts at grooming them to lead to their eventual sexual abuse.

Accidental Touching Trick

Children are often unaware that an accidental touching may be intentional, or it may be an offender attempting to touch closer to the genitalia the next time.

Assistance Lure Trick

Offenders may ask a child for help with directions or carrying packages. One convicted offender stated he liked to hang around kiddie hamburger restaurant bathrooms. He would abuse young boys under the guise of helping them with their zippers.

Another type of assistance lure may be an offender who senses a role he might play by assisting a family with children. His assistance might be needed for babysitting or for driving a child to activities. Watch for those who are more interested in your child than you.

Authority Trick

Many of us have taught our children to respect authority without realizing individuals who target our children take advantage of their position such as a religious or club leader, teacher, coach, or nurse/doctor.

Desensitize Trick

Offenders may continually talk to children about sex or use pornography to demonstrate sexual acts. They may arouse a child's curiosity by leaving sexual material and aids around where children may see them.

Drug & Alcohol Trick

Drugs or alcohol can be used to incapacitate children, making them highly vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Emergency Trick

Crisis can be confusing for young children. Offenders construct an emergency to lure children.

Fame Trick

The offender promises to make the child a movie star or sports star.

Friendship Trick

Older children may bribe a younger child (or same age) by saying they will not be their friend anymore unless they participate in a sexual act.

Games Trick

Body contact games such as wrestling are played where touching genitalia is part of the rules.

Hero Trick/Special Privileges Trick

This trick comes from an offender who is an older cousin, a coach, teacher, or person in a position of authority. Children are often impressed by these individuals. They may endure abuse to maintain a relationship in which they are receiving special privileges.

“I Know You” Trick

Do not write your child’s name on the outside of any of their clothing or items they use outside of their home, such as umbrellas or lunchboxes. This gives the offender an opportunity to make your child feel as though he or she knows the child.

Internet Trick

The internet has become a preying ground for sex offenders trying to lure victims. Offenders will get specific information from your child without directly asking for it. For example, predators may ask if your child plays on sports teams which would eventually lead to a discussion of where your child played these games. Ultimately, predators want to set up a meeting. Predators on the internet may also transmit pornography to your child.

Job Trick

Promises of high paying jobs easily influence teens/young adults into meeting individuals in questionable places for interviews where they may be sexually abused. Young children may be offered high pay for odd jobs inside an offender’s house where they may be sexually abused.

Legitimacy Trick

There are a few organizations that promote sexual relations with children and attempt to legitimize this activity. Those offenders may attempt to convince a child that sex with an adult is a legitimate activity.

Outing Trick

The offender attempts to take a child out alone for special trips or outings and insists that no one else attend. A pediatrician in New York who was convicted of sexually abusing many of his patients would take them away for the weekend quite often. Parents trusted him because he was well-liked, and he was perceived as a pillar of the community.

Pet Trick

The offender may ask a child for help in finding a lost dog. Offenders may carry props, such as a photo of a dog and a leash.

Teaching Trick

Assistance is offered to a family to teach a child a sport or to give lessons for a musical instrument, often without cost. Parents have also been informed that sexual predators may be working as driving school instructors.

Threat Trick

Children may be threatened into cooperation and further silenced. Once the abuse has taken place, offenders may threaten to expose the child either to the parents or to friends. The offender may threaten the abused child into recruiting other children.

Costume Trick

Most volunteers who dress up as clowns, cartoon characters, or as Santa Claus during the holiday season are NOT pedophiles attempting to access children. However, you should always be aware there are pedophiles who would do anything to get at kids.

Candy/Treats Trick

Children can easily be enticed by offers of candy, ice cream or other treats that parents might limit in the home.

Behaviors That May Indicate Physical Abuse

Children often do not tell us with words they have been physically abused. There are many reasons children might hesitate or be afraid to tell about what has happened.

Any one or more of the following signs could indicate that there has been physical abuse, or it could be indicative of another problem. A report to authorities is required when the child has unexplained physical evidence of abuse and/or reports abuse by an adult.

A physically abused child:

- Is wary of contacts with parents or other adults.
- Shows apprehension when other children cry.
- Exhibits behavior extremes.
- Demonstrates aggressiveness, withdrawal, or extreme mood changes.
- Is afraid to go home or has repeated incidents of running away.
- Reports injury by parents (sometimes blames self, e.g., "I was bad").
- Displays habit disorders.
- Shows self-injurious behaviors.
- Displays psychoneurotic reactions (excessive fears, compulsions, obsessions, hypochondria).
- May wear long sleeves or other concealing clothing inappropriate for weather, to hide injuries.
- Displays low self-esteem, including lack of initiative and extreme perfectionism.
- Attempts suicide.

NOTE: Any of these persistent behaviors could indicate there has been physical abuse, or it could be indicative of another problem. Anyone can have a "bad day," but patterns of behavior are reason for further exploration.

Small Groups

The Rod of the Bible

Facts about the Rod

- The rod of King David and King Solomon (and in many areas of the world today) was not the size and shape of a riding crop or a long slender switch. The rod was 14"—30" in length and was shaped like a club.
- The rod was hand crafted by the owner from a tree/shrub root to perfectly fit the shepherd's hand, size, and strength.
- The shepherd spent hours practicing and perfecting his skills with the rod.
- The rod was used for protection and discipline.

Protection

- The rod could be thrown with deadly force and accuracy at predators. King David killed lions and bears.
- The head of the rod could be used to club smaller predators that were close to the shepherd or sheep.
- The point of the rod combed through the wool of the sheep as the shepherd looked for bugs, weeds, skin sores, or anything else that would cause a problem for the sheep.

Discipline

- The rod could be thrown with gentle force to startle a sheep and turn it away from wandering too far or eating the wrong food.
- The rod was used to measure the lambs during the growing year. The shepherd kept track of each lamb's growth according to the measure of his rod.
- The point of the rod was used to examine the structural growth and development of the lambs. They knew some intervention techniques to correct deformity problems if found soon enough.
- The rod was not used to repeatedly hit a sheep.

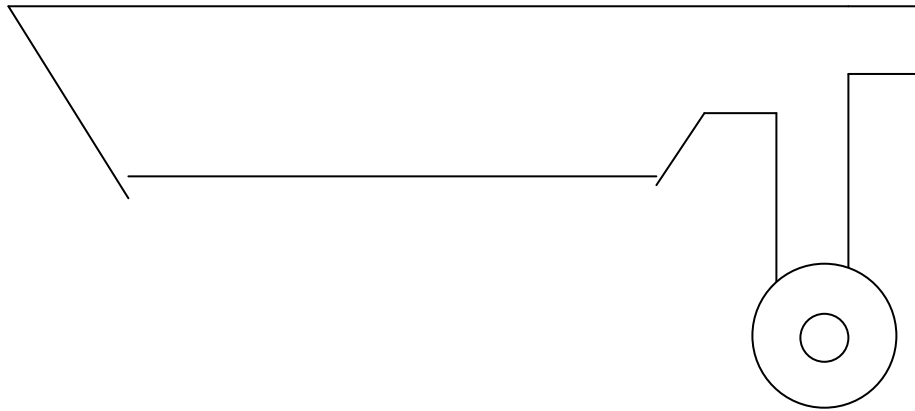
He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him (Prov 13:24).

In light of the information about the rod, how could this verse be misused?

What are some practical or positive applications for each point, for parents and children's workers?

Name some positive methods to protect and discipline children.

What You See and What You Get



In the space below, make five observations about the appearance of the wheelbarrow.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Developing Child-Sensitive Responses

Use these scenarios to explore ways you might minister to children with particular social needs.

For each case:

1. Identify ways the child's situation might have been discovered (behaviors the child might exhibit) **OR** what you might want to explore further based on observations of the child.
2. What are the ways the church might minister to the child or family?
3. Explore whether there is anything that should NOT be done in the child's situation.

Case 1: Seven-year-old Bobby lives with his single mother. He has been sexually abused by his uncle. He is seeing a counselor every week to deal with the abuse, but he is very sexually aware. Bobby is also very motivated by possessing things (a common value in today's society).

Case 2: Ten-year old Bailey is apathetic and hesitant to get involved in anything. She will rarely try any of the activities you plan for the class, and when she does, she usually breaks down in tears when she makes a mistake. She is always very well-dressed, and you have never noticed any physical signs of abuse.

Case 3: Tyler is a five-year-old child who has no understanding of God in his everyday life. He comes on the bus every Sunday. You have noticed him stuffing his pockets with crackers at snack time. His nose is constantly running, and he seems to have no idea how to use tissues.

Case 4: Sherry is an eight-year-old girl, who lives with her grandparents. She is cheerful, independent, and frequently asks questions about God that you have no idea how to answer. Her most frequent question is: "Why did God let my parents die in a car accident?"

Which child or children might be frightened by stories that highlight God's acts of punishment? Why?

Which child or children might be most disturbed about taking an offering at church? Why?

Which child or children would you expect to confuse answering a question correctly with being a Christian? Why?

Which child or children might be uncomfortable with shaking hands with the ushers in the foyer? Why?

Which child or children might become disruptive if the Sunday School craft is making a Father's Day card? Why?

How do the answers to these questions make you think differently about some of the things we do or say naturally as part of the church culture?

What are some of the important things we can do to help children have a positive church experience?

There are not any easy answers. Each situation is unique and should be approached that way. What should emerge is a new level of sensitivity in the words we say, the assumptions we make, and the complexity of the task of interacting and meeting the needs of children.

Understanding Childhood Spirituality

Question: What comes to your mind when you think of the word *spirituality*?

The word is tossed around loosely these days. Many people are fond of saying, "I'm spiritual, but I'm not religious." Usually that means they have a belief in some form of God. However, they don't value the historic church or community practices of religion, and they don't want to go to church.

Spirituality is a term used outside the church to include people of all faiths (or no faith). Many use the word spiritual to refer to aspects of human experience that are beyond rational explanation. In educational literature, spirituality is used as a word that relates to meaning-making, self-reflection, mystical knowing, emotion, morality, religion, ecology, and creativity. None of those characteristics *excludes* God, but none of them *depends* on a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, either.¹⁴

One of the problems experienced by authors and researchers alike is the problem of a common definition of spirituality, especially as it relates to children. It is difficult to define in a way that is big enough to encompass all the aspects of spirituality, without the definition being so big that anyone's experience can only be described as individual. Search Institute's Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence has proposed the following definition that reflects an inclusive view of spirituality:

*Spiritual development is the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred. It is the developmental "engine" that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs and practices.*¹⁵

Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude also propose the following hypotheses about the nature of spirituality.

1. It is an intrinsic part of being human. All humans across time and in all places have demonstrated spiritual concerns.
2. It is a life-shaping force. Spiritual practices form the inner life and shape the practices and behaviors of people for good or for ill.
3. It involves growth and change. Change can be developmental or sudden, and it can be nurtured or thwarted by what happens to people.
4. It is embedded in and shaped by relationships, community, and narrative (story). Spirituality is influenced by interactive relationship and not necessarily through formal teaching.
5. Young people are active agents. Young people do not just inherit spirituality. They are actively involved in both understanding and influencing spiritually significant events and experiences.
6. Spirituality overlaps with—but it is not the same as—religion, faith, and belief. The emphasis is on the human process and on connections to others and/or to God.

The Children's Spiritual Conference, speaking from a decidedly Christian perspective, has proposed the following working definition for children's spirituality:

Children's spirituality is the child's development of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, within the context of a community of believers that fosters that relationship, as well as the child's understanding of—and response to—that relationship.¹⁶

In attempting to deal with the many definitions that are used in Christian writings, Don Ratcliff and Scottie May suggest in the book, *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, "If children's spirituality is to be considered as involving the whole person, every area of the child, perhaps there is benefit in deferring the development of an ultimate definition, and entertaining a multiplicity of definitions."¹⁷ Remember that YOU are part of that process of discussion in the greater Church as you bring your own thoughts and experiences into those contributed by the researchers.

Ratcliff is contrasting what the church has typically looked at as very simple (childlike faith) with the complexity of human nature, created in the image of God. He suggests that what many parents and teachers have seen as simple formulas for spiritual development of their children may be more complex than we have realized.

Ratcliff suggests that, while our traditional methods may be important, it may not be the legalistic map of the process that really matters. Instead spiritual formation is a much more complex process that includes parents and significant spiritual influencers of the child's life. WHAT we do with children is not as important as HOW we are with them. The most important contribution may be how these significant people demonstrate—live out—their personal relationships with God so they can lead children to discover the reality of God in their own lives as they journey together.

For children, it may not be learning the words, theology or the denominational language that directs their spiritual development. It will be their personal encounters with God and others who represent God that makes the difference. Personal encounters with God and others can take place through creative expression, in nature, in relationship-building, in working together, in traditions of worship or spiritual disciplines—in virtually every kind of human experience, even difficult or painful ones. Structured teaching plays a role in helping children to have experiences, but it is when children *experience* God personally they are formed most directly.

This shouldn't come as a surprise to us as more mature believers. Think of a time when you encountered God in a meaningful way outside your salvation or sanctification experience. What circumstances surrounded it? Was it in a teaching environment or somewhere else? What role did religious beliefs you had been taught play in the encounter?

The idea of education playing a supportive role may lead parents and pastors away from something we want them to do. We want them to emphasize watching for opportunities to include children in experiencing God, and then helping the children to understand the experiences as gifts from God for their growth. These opportunities to see God can be found in daily life events as well as intentional activities. **Those who help children develop spiritually must become moment-by-moment mentors,**

always on the lookout for places where God and the child's experience intersect. We should perhaps expect our teaching efforts to *explain* encounters with God more than to *create* those opportunities.

While we want to remain open to many children coming to know God, we will look more closely at some specific strategies for encouraging children's spiritual development. We will use the specifically Christian definition for spiritual formation, recognizing the source and focus of spiritual formation for Christians is God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Development

Perspective 1 is represented by Gary A. Buzzelli and Kevin Walsh in chapter 7 of the book, *Handbook of Children's Religious Education*.

Judgments of what is right or wrong, of how one treats others, and of how one wants to be treated by others are issues of morality and form a basis for spiritual development. Spiritual development is shaped by and evidenced in moral behavior.

Children do not start out knowing how to treat others morally. Watch babies in the nursery pull their mother's hair and grab the toy they want from the hands of another! The Golden Rule means nothing. They learn to care about the responses of others gradually. The child's ability to form moral judgments by himself or herself comes through the process of discipline.

Buzzelli and Walsh state:

Discipline is the process of learning the behaviors, values, and attitudes which form the foundations of morality upon which such judgments are made . . . One specific goal in the process of development is autonomy—the ability to think for oneself while remaining aware of and responsive to the needs and feelings of others . . . Spirituality is influenced by prior interpersonal [human] relationship as well as autonomous choosing of one's relationship with the divine. Mature faith is at once autonomous and relational.

These authors view the process of spiritual development as dependent on practical aspects of morality. They believe morality will be discovered within and in response to interactions with adults and peers who are important in their lives. Spiritual development is connected to loving God by loving others and acting justly as part of a moral order.

Perspective 2 comes from psychologist and author Dr. James Dobson. In his book *Hide or Seek*, Dr. Dobson lays out a value system based on six biblical principles he believes are foundational for a child's spiritual development. They are as follows:

- Devotion to God
- Love for Mankind
- Respect for authority
- Obedience to divine commandments
- Self-discipline and self-control
- Humbleness of spirit

Dobson believes that if these six values are developed in a child, these in turn provide the avenue for spiritual development. These six principles are developed by parents and other significant adults in the child's life by using the proper combination of both *love* and *discipline*. Discipline, according to Dobson, is the redirecting process for a defiant child that can include corporal punishment. Dobson bases this theory upon the developmental principles of Lawrence Kohlberg, who states that moral development begins with punishment/obedience orientation. According to Kohlberg, young children

are motivated to be obedient to avoid punishment. It is not until a little later in development that the idea of being a good boy or good girl becomes motivating. In other words, in order for morality to emerge, parents have to establish a context of obedience. Since children are motivated to avoid discomfort before they are motivated by wanting to be good, the first and the most effective way to motivate children is through punishing inappropriate behavior. It is this morality framework that must be established for proper spiritual development to occur.

Dobson is not saying that someone can't experience spiritual development without these six principles being in place. However, when a child is operating from these six principles, the probability is greater the child will sense and respond to God. And again the best way for a parent to help a child develop these principles is through firm and consistent discipline in a loving relationship.¹⁸

Perspective 3 is provided by Catherine Stonehouse. In her book *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith*, Stonehouse provides a strong argument for the importance of the formation of their parents as key to the formation of children. But formation doesn't rest solely with the parents. Stonehouse emphasizes the importance of intergenerational religious and spiritual experiences for children, and the importance of involving children in congregational life.

Stonehouse views spiritual development as emerging from a child's significant relationship interactions. Stonehouse is more direct about the role of the church in modeling and shaping spiritual development than Buzzelli and Walsh. According to Stonehouse, spiritual development is established and nurtured by parents, but parents and children alike need intergenerational religious/spiritual experiences in local congregations.

Perspective 4 is based on a diagram developed by Scottie May and presented in the book, *Children Matter*. This perspective fleshes out the reciprocity involved in spiritual formation centered in encounters with God. In this model, children experience spiritual development as the Holy Spirit facilitates behaviors and values that come from being in the presence of God. At the same time the Holy Spirit leads children to encounters with God as they practice or experience each of the following behaviors and values:

- A sense of awe and wonder
- Knowing God's character and actions
- Knowing and being formed in the character of God's people
- Owning an identity as part of the people of God
- Involvement in service and mission

May says:

Every encounter with God is initiated by God's Spirit, reaching out to draw children—and persons of all ages—into the experience of God's loving, transforming presence. We may design activities intended to accomplish the goals identified in the [behaviors and values], but without God's initiating activity, those experiences are spiritually sterile. On the other hand, teachers, leaders and shepherds can prayerfully set up means for reaching these goals and experience the joy of partnering with God as they facilitate the child's transforming encounters with God . . . Over time, the maturing child's encounter with God will grow through experiences and learning in the [behaviors and values].¹⁹

In other words, when children encounter God, they may experience a sense of awe and wonder as a result. On the other hand, they may experience a sense of awe and wonder and encounter God as a result of those feelings. They may encounter God and come to a knowledge of God's character and actions as a result of the encounter, or they may learn about God's character and actions and have an encounter with God as a result of their learning.

The idea of encountering God is not that children are miniature adults who will have adult responses or interpretations. Children are born with the "capacity for wonder, joy and love, and they can, within the limits set by their psychological development, respond to the presence of God in their lives."

Welcoming Children as Part of the Church

A new observation has emerged that has church leaders from various denominations scratching their heads and attempting to understand what is happening in the church.

By the age of 25, a huge proportion of former youth group members have left the church and are no longer associated with a church body. More of our youth are leaving the church than staying in its fellowship.

What do you think is happening? How can churches who are properly preparing children and youth lose so many of their young people?

The question may be raised, "Well don't they eventually return?" The response is that some do and some do not. Some come back when they become parents. Others return to the Body of Christ, but they return to a tradition very different from the one in which they grew up.

The question is not, "Will they return after they leave?" but, "Why are they leaving?" Some say they seem to need to break free of their parents' lives. One way to do this is to find their own expression of spiritual values. But is it possible that this can be accomplished in ways besides leaving the church? Of course!

Our first tendency may be to blame the kids who leave for the problems. "They're rebelling." "They're selfish and don't want to be committed." "They don't want to give back." "They're too busy for God." Could there be more self-reflective answers? Could the church be contributing to the problem?

Have we failed to effectively integrate our children and youth into the body of the church? In all fairness, this is a new problem in the history of the church, and it is a result of good intentions. As the church began to understand and respond to developmental theories coming out of psychology and sociology, we began to establish specialized ministries. This was based on the idea that children and youth have different developmental needs and different cognitive abilities than adults. If individuals could learn at their own developmental levels and be taught in ways that are associated with their cognitive abilities, this would create ideal opportunities for spiritual development. As with any good idea, this process may have been carried too far.

The idea of having separate gatherings by age groups is NOT a bad practice. The idea of different levels of development is both biblically and experientially sound. It has been acted on throughout history in varying ways. It is part of our tradition that has served us well. We are better able to help children make sense of the Bible, keep them engaged with activities that relate to their immediate needs, and provide them with important ties to their peers. Age-segregated gatherings are child-centered, and they serve to help children positively relate Christ to their daily lives.

Age segregation has limits as well. It may limit the child's deep perspective of the mission of the church to what is of immediate concern to them. They may not see the bigger picture of church life or realize church life is not "all about me." On the other extreme, it may give children the hidden message they are not part of what is "really

important" in the church body. They may have a part in the music or a brief children's sermon, but then they are sent off while the adults do "real church," confirming in their minds that church is for old folks or people who are "not like me."

Another possible negative is a consumer mentality. The focus on possessions and things, as well as the idea that the world exists to make them happy, is a Western problem many parents fight against. Unfortunately, when children and youth are placed into specialized programs where the primary motive for the children becomes having fun, the consumer mindset is reinforced. For example, the children come into the gym for children's church, and they bounce through an inflatable bouncy toy, emerge to find a board game they want to play, hear a short lesson, and then have refreshments. This may become the pattern for expectations in the church. Again, none of those things are wrong, but the danger is the mind of the child subconsciously becomes accustomed to the idea that church is all about me being happy, having fun, and keeping me entertained. The focus is distorted from the purpose the adult has for ministry and the message the child received. Some children would say, "The other church service is boring." "I don't like going to adult church." And when they get a little older, you may hear comments like, "Why do we have to study the Bible? Why can't we play like we always do?" The first great falling-off point for children raised in the church is the transition from the children's department to the youth department.

If we think back to our understanding of children's spirituality, spiritual formation is about the whole child in relation to the fullness of God. Given this definition, we walk on dangerous ground when we make *fun* the main purpose of our programming. And we are on equally dangerous ground if we don't recognize the significance of fun for the child in today's world. Ecclesiastes 3:1 gives us a picture of this holistic perspective: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven."

Our programming should direct toward our purposes. We will talk about this important truth throughout the course. It is part of our purpose to see children come to a full, lifelong participation in the church. To do this, we must take a whole life perspective from the cradle to the grave.

You may already have a plan for the way you want to run a children's program. Think of outcomes, not convenience or previous expectations. Children's programs and youth programs are important. However, if a church fails to truly integrate the children and youth into the overall ministry of the church for 18 years of their life, can we expect them to want to serve and be a part of that ministry? We believe in miracles, but we shouldn't make them necessary in order to keep our children and youth.

Lesson 5: The Spirituality of Children

Due This Lesson

One-page paper
Completion of Resource 4-6
Reading Resources 4-7, 4-8, and 4-9
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- articulate a definition of Christian childhood spirituality
- list four key perspectives of Christian spiritual development of children
- evaluate methods of integrating children into the life and ministry of the church
- describe the appropriate partnership between the church and family to nurture children's spiritual formation

Homework Assignments

Complete Resource 5-5.

Read Resource 5-6.

Interview one child under the age of 5, one child between 7 and 10, and one child over the age of 12. Follow the interview questions provided on Resource 5-7. Record the responses, and be prepared to share the results. You need only to report the children's responses at this point, without your interpretations. Make an extra copy of each child's responses.

Complete Resource 5-8

Read Resource 5-9

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Reflect on your own childhood spirituality. How does your own experience reflect the content of the material in today's class? How do you feel about integrating children into the greater church fellowship?

For the two activities involving children, you may find it helpful to work in pairs so that one person would be asking the questions or running the tests while the other person records the information.

An Inclusive Model of Spirituality

The following hypotheses about spirituality are adapted from work by Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude (Search Institute's Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence). Look closely at each hypothesis, and answer the following questions:

- What biblical principle might support this statement?
 - In what ways does this statement appear to be true?
 - What are some potential problems with this statement?
 - Is this statement useful for my understanding of spirituality? Why or why not?
1. It is an intrinsic part of being human. All humans across time and in all places have demonstrated spiritual concerns.
 2. It is a life-shaping force. Spiritual practices form the inner life, and shape the practices and behaviors of people for good or for ill.
 3. It involves growth and change. Change can be developmental or sudden, and it can be nurtured or thwarted by what happens to people.
 4. It is embedded in and shaped by relationships, community, and narrative (story). Spirituality is influenced by interactive relationship and not necessarily through formal teaching.
 5. Young people are active agents. Young people do not just inherit spirituality. They are actively involved in both understanding and influencing spiritually significant events and experiences.
 6. Spirituality overlaps with—but it is not the same as—religion, faith, and belief. The emphasis is on the human process and on connections to others and/or to God.

Comparing Working Definitions of Children's Spirituality

Neither of these groups would say their definitions are set in stone. Both propose them as "working definitions" that should be adapted through ongoing conversations and new understandings.

Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence:

Spiritual development is the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred. It is the developmental "engine" that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs and practices.²⁰

Children's Spirituality Conference:

Children's spirituality is the child's development of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, within the context of a community of believers that fosters that relationship, as well as the child's understanding of—and response to—that relationship.²¹

Small Groups

Read this story as a group and then answer the questions.

One Family's Story



This summer the Fox family attended the Nazarene Camp meeting together. We did not know the district had a separate children's service going on in a separate building. After my wife and I finished singing in the choir, we joined our children who were sitting in the congregation. My seven-year-old son took his place on my lap, where he stayed for the entire service. It was a wonderful time we experienced as we listened together to the preacher. If there were points he did not understand, I would whisper comments in his ear to clarify them.

As the altar call was given I whispered instructions to him about what was taking place, what different individuals were doing, and what our role was in this part of the service. We prayed together for those at the altar.

As we drove home, we had a great discussion about the service, what my son had learned, and what he had experienced. I am thankful we did not know about children's camp meeting service so my son and daughters could be welcomed and find their place in the main service.

As I reflected on my childhood, I realized I had given my heart to the Lord at age five in a revival service in my church. My father was there, and he prayed with me and held me close as I testified about my love for Jesus for the first time. I remembered my first communion in the main service with my family at age six. I felt my father's arm around me, giving me support and encouragement.

Find all of the sensory experiences (sight, sound, touch, feel, taste) in this story.

Find all the people who were involved in this story.

Find all the ways the father interacted with the child in the story.

Find all the ways God was experienced in the story and by whom.

What challenges could this story present for a different family?

What solutions could be offered?

What needs to be in place for this kind of experience to work?

Tips for Parents

Here are a few suggestions for what parents can do to assist their children in becoming incorporated in the church.

- Sit near the front so the child can see what is happening. It also sends a signal about the importance of what is taking place. Point out families stand in line for long periods of time and pay much money to get "good seats" for entertainment events.
- Introduce your child to people around you.
- Assist your child in being prepared for the next thing in the bulletin or onscreen, like finding page numbers in the hymnal or the Bible.
- Bring paper and pencils, and ask the child to draw a picture that goes along with what the pastor is preaching about, instead of just random drawing. Then have a discussion about "their notes" on the way home.

Ordering Ministry Strategies

Reorder the following ministry strategies for importance to your church and importance to you as you think about what is best for spiritual development.

	Importance to church	Importance to you
Children's worship		
Age-graded Sunday School		
Intergenerational worship		
Age-graded socials		
Intergenerational socials		
Intergenerational Sunday School		
Age-level small groups		
Family small groups with childcare		
Intergenerational worship team or choir		
Children's camp		
Family camp		
Children's holiday performances		
Bus ministry		
Take home activities		

A Biblical Foundation for a Holistic Perspective

In Luke 10:25-28, Jesus expressed the idea that an individual should be viewed as possessing several different developmental areas of growth. Jesus was asked a question concerning how to inherit eternal life.

Jesus answered the question with a deeper probing question: "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"

After much contemplation the expert in religious law gave the correct response: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and Love your neighbor as yourself."

"You have answered correctly," Jesus said, "Do this and you will live."

Notice the Law doesn't say, "Love the Lord your God with everything." This would bring us to the same ultimate conclusion, but the Law is careful to be very specific about identifying different areas of ourselves that we bring to God. Out of these areas flows our love for God and our neighbor. Let's look at these five areas.

1. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart.* This implies loving God with all of our emotions. We will share our hurts and our disappointments with Him. We must love Him enough to share with Him every area of our feelings—thereby allowing Him to be Lord of our emotions. The love we demonstrate to Him and the love we experience when He is the passion of our lives and Lord of our emotions—even that beyond our understanding—brings us into the deepest levels of trust and intimacy. This is part of our psychosocial development.
2. *And all your soul.* The soul is the essence of our eternal being. This suggests the total surrender of spiritual life to God—all that is seen and unseen, all we are in the past, present, and future in communion with God. (This is all that will be said about spiritual development here, since we discussed it in the last chapter. However, we will discuss aspects of faith development that are closely associated.)
3. *And with all your strength.* Strength refers to our power, forces, and abilities. As humans, we have the power of will, choice, and bodily strength. Our physical bodies are the dwelling place of our strengths, and we are to direct and nourish our bodies toward loving God in the area of physical development.
4. *And with all your mind.* The mind is the home of all our understanding, imagination, and rationality. Its task is to pull together all the other elements of our lives into a purposeful, examined life grounded in loving relationship with God. Our minds work in patterns that are constantly being formed by information and experience. We are to love God enough to let Him give us the mind and thoughts of Christ as He works in us. This is reflected in cognitive development.
5. *And love your neighbor as yourself.* Our love for God is worked out in relationship with others. We are not alone. We are always connecting to others, responding to needs in the world around us. We cannot separate our love for others from our

love for God. We are continually developing relationally, and God expects us to be as concerned about the good of others—our neighbors near and far—as we are concerned about the good of ourselves. Jesus talks a lot about the kingdom of God. God’s order for relationship is love, out of which flow justice and mercy in His image. This is reflected in our moral development.

This scripture is a beautiful example of our different areas of development. The challenge to you as children’s pastors is to understand each of these areas of development and determine how to help children love God in an increasing way with sensitivity to each of these areas.

The question posed to Jesus was about the way to eternal life. Jesus refused to give priority to any of these individual areas of development. Instead, He emphasized the way these are intertwined and the need for a total surrender of ourselves to a relationship lived in love.

Child Interview

Directions:

Interview one child under the age of 5, one child between 7 and 10, and one child over the age of 12. Ask all the children the same questions. Listen to the responses, and record what each child says. Make a separate response sheet for each child. If possible, conduct the interview in person. Watch the children's body language as they answer. If you absolutely can not conduct the interviews in person, you may do it over the phone. With parents' permission, make an audio recording of your interviews and record your notes later.

Interview Questions for the Children

1. How old are you?
2. When is your birthday?
3. What is your favorite food?
4. What do you do for fun?
5. If you could pick any place to visit, where would you go?
6. Will you ever be the same age as your (brother or sister) at the same time?
7. How old is God?
8. Where do dreams come from? Where do dreams go?
9. Where does the moon go at night?
10. How do birds learn to sing?
11. Was your mom ever a baby?
12. If someone pushed you down while you were playing, what would you do? Why?
13. Let's say someone gave you a candy bar. You can share it by dividing it any way you like or not share it at all. What would you do? Why?
14. Do you go to church?
 - If yes, why do you go to church?
 - If yes, what is your favorite part about going to church?
15. Do you ever sit in the main service with the adults?
 - If so, when? Every Sunday? Only for the music? Once a month? Almost never except for special occasions?
16. Do you like being in the main service? Why?

Piaget's Test with Children

A great way to cover the area of cognitive development and relate ideas of faith development is to evaluate children of two different ages. Find a child that fits into the middle two stages of Piaget's (Pee-ah-zhey's) stages. A good spacing of ages would be a 4- or 5- year-old **and** a 9- or 10-year- old. Use the test protocol provided.

Evaluate each child separately so that the child is not influenced by the responses of the other child. Record responses but do it as subtly as possible—maybe have someone else do the recording. Expect different responses between the two ages.

Explain to the child you are **not** looking for a right answer, but you want to know what they think. Encourage the child to give any response he or she believes to be the best. Do not try to influence them or indicate that you disagree with the response.

Needed Equipment:

- 2 clear glasses that are exactly the same (filled to the same level with water) and 1 tall thin clear glass tube (this can be a flower vase that is tall and skinny or a tall glass)
- 20 pennies
- 2 pencils the same length
- Two balls of play dough, exactly the same size
- 1 deck of cards—or 20 cards that are different in some way
- 1 table

Have each of the experiments set up before the participants arrive.

Water Level Test—Conservation of Quantity

Have two matching glasses half-filled with water, sitting at the end of the table. Place a tall, thin, clear glass tube to the right of the glasses.



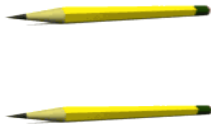
Start with the two glasses of water. Ask the child: *"Do these glasses have the same amount of water or does one have more than the other?"*

If the child says one has more than the other, pour a little back and forth until the child believes the glasses have the same amount. Now pour the water from one of the glasses into the taller glass.

Place the short glass of water and the taller glass of water side by side. Ask the same question: *“Do these glasses have the same amount of water or does one have more than the other?”*

Pencil Test—Conservation of Length

Have two pencils that are the same length sitting next to each other about two inches apart. The pencils should be parallel to each other so it is easily seen that they are the same length.



Point out the two pencils, and ask the following question: *“Are these pencils the same length, or is one longer than the other?”*

Now move one pencil forward so it extends at the point further than the other pencil. Now ask the child: *“Are these pencils the same length, or is one longer than the other?”*

Pennies Test—Conservation of Numbers

Place two rows of pennies side by side, so each one is touching the other in a straight line.

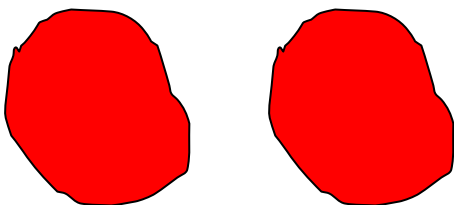


Ask the child: *“Do these two rows of pennies have the same number, or does one line have more than the other?”*

Leave one group of pennies so they are still touching one another. Spread the second row so the ten pennies are about one inch apart. Now ask again: *“Do these two rows of pennies have the same number, or does one line have more than the other?”*

Play Dough Test—Conservation of Mass

Place two balls of play dough side by side. Make the balls the same in size and shape.



Ask the child: *“Do these two balls of play dough have the same amount, or does one have more than the other?”* Sometimes children will say one has more than the other. If so, ask the child to pinch off enough to make them the same.

Now take one of the balls and smash it flat. Ask: *“Do these two balls of play dough have the same amount, or does one have more than the other?”*

Card Test—Organizing and Categorizing

Place cards in five rows across and four rows down. These can be any kind of cards as long as all 20 cards are different in some way.



Tell the child: *“I am thinking of **one** of the cards on the table. You can ask me any question that I can answer with a yes or no. The goal is for you to figure out which card I am thinking of in the fewest number of guesses. OK, go ahead.”*

After each of the children have completed the five tests ask them questions that will help you see how a child thinks. You should ask each child the same questions so that you can compare responses.

Childhood Development

Stages of Cognitive Development

Piaget said a child's cognitive development emerges in stages. As a child matures, higher levels of thinking begin to emerge. This seems to happen at roughly the same ages for all humans, even though thinking is influenced by interactions with the environment. Try to focus on what a child might be capable of at each of the different stages.

During the **Sensorimotor** stage (0–2 years of age), children are using their senses and their bodies to understand and use objects. They depend a lot on information they get through tasting and touching. In order to come to know something, they have to directly experience it. A picture of a ball is meaningless unless a child has touched a ball, sucked on the ball, held the ball, dropped the ball, rolled the ball, and thrown the ball. But once a child has had experience with a ball, the child begins to form a mental model that generalizes the characteristics of one ball to recognize other balls. The child can become somewhat confused when a ball doesn't perform like balls "should." A child learns if I extend my arm, I can reach the ball, pick it up, and put it in my mouth. I let go of it, and it will bounce. Children also learn if they put dirt in their mouths it tastes awful. If they put cookies in their mouths, it tastes good. They learn how to touch, what to touch, what feels good, what doesn't feel good, what can be eaten, and what can't. All of this happens by direct physical experience and experimentation.

As the children move through their second year of life, they enter into the **Pre-operational** stage (2–7 years of age). They begin to develop a system of symbolic representations.

Language falls into this category. The word milk means something with a particular taste. If I say it, I will get a drink of it. Candy means something sweet. If I say it, I might get a bite of it, or I might not. (Incidentally, this makes little sense to two year olds and requires constant accommodation and assimilation. If the mental model is "I say the word, I get the thing," imagine how frustrating it is when the rule works so inconsistently!)

These children are beginning to understand cause and effect, but only within the limits of their direct experience. For example, if I touch something hot, it burns. If I drop a pencil, it falls to the ground. I know this because I've experienced it. But if you ask a three-year-old child what will happen if you drop paint on a white shirt, he or she has no way of knowing until the child has personal experiences with paint and shirts. Once children have this experience, they may be able to make some predictions about similar things, such as a marker on a pink shirt or Easter egg dye on a pair of pants. This is part of the assimilation/accommodation process, too, and it is subject to lots of trial and error before their conclusions are dependable.

Children are also dealing with "egocentrism." In Lesson 1, we discussed how this is not a matter of being selfish. Their minds don't understand that their perspective is not the only perspective. Children do know others *feel* differently than they do. They do not have any cognitive strategies to figure out why.

Children in this stage are very literal thinkers. When the words they hear don't make sense to them, they MAKE them make sense. Our songs and hymns are full of imagery that doesn't make sense if you interpret it literally. It's not uncommon for a child to think that if you climb high enough, you'll reach heaven. They may hear the words of the great hymn, "The Solid Rock" as "all other ground is *stinking* sand." This reminds us to be careful about checking for understanding when new words are introduced.

During the **Concrete Operational** stage (7–11 years of age), the child becomes a more flexible thinker. For example, there is now the ability to mentally reverse an event in the real world. External actions can now be represented as internal ones. For example, you may hear young children trying to figure out how many marbles they have by counting out loud. A child in the concrete operational stage can count the numbers in their head. This child now realizes two candy bars and three candy bars are going to be five candy bars no matter how you arrange them. They can classify by more than one characteristic, for example color AND size at the same time.

This stage is dependent on concrete examples to understand. This does not mean they can not understand some abstract ideas like "big and small," but abstract application is still difficult for them. For example, "fairness" is an abstract term. Children at this stage still struggle identifying some consequence they don't like as being fair, whether they like it or not.

The final stage Piaget identifies is **Formal Operational** (11—older). In this stage, individuals can take multiple variables into account. They can think through how their conclusions will work out, whether or not they have any direct experience with the variables in a situation. They can propose alternative solutions, collect information to help them work through the options, and draw conclusions. Older children can begin to think outside the box with abstract thinking that is more flexible, logical, and scientific.

Past research into Piaget's theories has found that Piaget was basically correct in his conclusions. However, he underestimated the younger children and overestimated those in the later stage. We know many people will never reach the Formal Operational stage—or will not use this higher level thinking in every area of their lives. Yet Piaget believed everyone would enter this stage as they entered adolescence.

The first three stages are the most important for you to understand as you work with infants to preadolescents. We will come back and consolidate this information in Lesson 6. Children do not always think according to the same rules as adults. Keep these stages in mind as we look at stages of moral development.

Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg developed a cognitive-developmental theory of moral development based upon Piaget's basic theory. Kohlberg believed a child's thinking about moral issues must be determined by their cognitive abilities. Kohlberg did not measure a child's actual behavior but their ability to reason. Kohlberg looked only at moral reasoning and not the definition of morality versus immorality. In other words, if someone does the right thing because they want to please someone, the individual is not making a moral judgment or behaving morally. It is only when someone is able to evaluate the situation and examine the outcomes and come to a reasoned moral judgment that morality is involved. Kohlberg used the individual's responses to

hypothetical situations to determine at what level and stage the person is able to reason morally.

How would you respond to this dilemma?

Your spouse is dying from a very rare disease, and you get the diagnosis. If your spouse does not get help immediately, he or she will only live one more week. A clinic in your area is the only place in the world where there is a serum that can guarantee full recovery. There are no other known options, so your spouse will die without this serum. The medicine is very, very expensive, because this condition is so rare and the amount of serum is so limited.

*You contact the clinic and ask for help. The serum will cost \$50,000, and it can take up to a month for you to have access to it. You explain that your spouse will be dead in seven days. The clinic staff asks if you have the money. You tell them you might be able to come up with it, but it will take time. They say you **MUST** pay for it before they can administer it.*

You spend the next few days trying to get the money. After you have exhausted every possible avenue, you are still \$30,000 short. The clinic staff maintains they will not give your spouse the treatment until the bill is paid in full.

Your spouse is getting weaker and will soon die. There are no more avenues to get the money in time. What should you do? Would you let your spouse die? Would you commit a crime to get the serum?

Kohlberg would be looking for moral reasoning *behind* your decision, not *at* the decision you make. How do you perceive the law as it relates to the value of life? Is there a principle that you follow? If so, what is it, and what is the motive behind it? Do you make your decision based on the fear of not wanting to be punished for doing something wrong? Do you make your decision based on what the law says? Do you operate from a social principle that says the value of life supersedes all laws? Based upon your response, Kohlberg would place you at a certain level and stage. Each stage deals with an issue of justice. Kohlberg described the basic moral responses to *Justice* at each stage.

- *At Stage 1, justice is punishing the bad in terms of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."*
- *At Stage 2, it is exchanging favors and goods in an equal manner.*
- *At Stage 3 and 4, it is treating people as they desire in terms of the conventional rules.*
- *At Stage 5, it is recognized that all rules and laws flow from justice, from a social contract between the governors and the governed, designed to protect the equal rights of all.*
- *At Stage 6, personally chosen moral principles are also principles of justice, the principles any member of a society would choose for that society if he did not know what his position would be in the society and in which he might be the least advantaged.*

In other words those in the upper levels of Kohlberg's stages would not see rules or laws as supreme. It would be unjust to lose a human life due to greed or even corporate laws. In the example, the justice of preservation of life in comparison to money or laws is the ultimate moral value. There may be different ways to accomplish this, but the highest moral response values life over law.

Kohlberg suggested higher levels and stages within his theory are associated with higher ordered reasoning skills. Some critics argue that Stages 5 and 6 really are more philosophical than psychological. Based upon this type of system, it is possible to label different responses and even societies as morally better than others.

The main attacks on Kohlberg's theory have tended to focus on his use of male test subjects. He prescribed logic and justice as the measures of moral judgment. Some people ask, "What makes justice a higher value than love or grace? What makes logic a superior approach to cooperation?" A few other aspects must be looked at to determine the usefulness of the theory for Christians.

1. Experience has demonstrated that moral reasoning does not always lead to moral behavior. In other words, many people know certain things are wrong and can reason they are wrong, but they will still choose to do them. A theory that does not take into consideration an individual's moral character will be found lacking in usefulness.
2. It should be noted that Kohlberg does not seem to make room for decisions based upon a faith in divine intervention. For example, in the earlier dilemma, if someone responded that they would pray and trust God to spare their spouse's life or take them home to heaven, this would not be seen as having a high level of moral reasoning.

Nevertheless, Kohlberg's insights can help us establish discipline policies that are consistent with the reasoning stages of the child. At stage one, the very earliest stage of development, children are not really reasoning but responding to consequences. Punishment is one consequence to be avoided, but so are naturally occurring "punishments" or negative consequences. It would be pointless to try to reason with a young child to help him or her understand with words what he or she doesn't have the vocabulary to understand. In other words, a negative consequence of biting one's mother is seeing mom's face wrinkle and her voice harshly saying, "Biting hurts" as she puts the child down.

We shape children's moral development as we respond appropriately to the reasoning that motivates them. We need to help children follow rules both because of the consequences and because the rules (or the application of the rules to others) benefit them. We shape children's moral development when we show approval for their good behavior. We shape children's moral development when we help them apply established rules to challenges, and when we help them learn to develop rules for themselves that they are then held accountable for.

As children mature, they become ready to handle moral decisions according to the application of different principles. Interestingly, a strong sense of moral order in childhood seems to help children become MORE able to deal with inconsistencies and gray areas later in life. A harsh and inconsistent application of moral order in childhood leads to an inability to deal with inconsistencies effectively throughout life.

Piaget suggests that strategies for dealing with misbehavior should be called "sanctions" rather than punishment. Reciprocity sanctions seem to differ from ideas of punishment because the consequences used in these sanctions are directly related to the decisions the child is currently making. They are proportional to the seriousness of the misbehavior. Figuratively speaking, there is care not to use a fire hose to fill a drinking cup. There is care not to try to put out a forest fire with a water bottle.

Eric Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Erik Erikson was a German-born Dane whose life was spent studying the emotional lives of individuals. Erikson believed we all pass through eight stages or crises in our lives. How we resolve each of these conflicts will determine how we enter into the next stage and resolve that crisis. We will only focus on the first four that deal with childhood.

The parable of the wise and foolish builders can establish a mental model for us. From that parable, we learn that foundations are important, more important than the building that is erected ON the foundation. Erikson's theory fits well with that mental model.

Stage One, which happens very early in life, is one of the most important stages. It sets the foundation for all later building. However, Erikson is clear that any stage that is not resolved adequately will interfere with the development of tasks that are encountered later in life. We see this concept in action every day. We see how people who have not developed a proper sense of autonomy have trouble establishing love relationships. Those who have not established initiative struggle with the tasks of school and giving back that come much later in life.

Let's look at the foundational stages of psychosocial development that affect children. In Stage One, John Bowlby, a developmental psychologist famous for his work on the concept of attachment, speaks of developing an internal working model that will be established in the first two years of life. At this stage, children are very dependent. They have limited resources for getting what they need: mostly crying, screaming, and reaching within the limits of their mobility. So it is the caregiver who actually gets or gives what the child needs, based on the cues of the child. How the caregiver responds determines what the child comes to believe about him or herself. Bowlby states that all individuals will come to one of two conclusions:

1. I **can** trust others, and I have what it takes to illicit from others what I need
- or
2. I **can't** trust others, and I do not have what it takes to illicit from others what I need.

Bowlby believed that this conclusion would determine how a child approaches all later challenges. Will the child have trust in others and self-confidence? Bowlby implies that the two questions are inseparably linked.

This means it is important to respond to an infant's signals promptly and accurately. In other words, if a child is crying because of a wet diaper, you should not let the child continue to cry. But you must figure out that you need to change the diaper—not to play with the baby or feed the baby. Promptness of response, accuracy of interpretation of a child's signals, and consistency of emotionally warm care are the keys to effectively establishing trust for a young child.

Stage Two deals with self-control. Erikson believed the way a parent deals with toilet training can play a big role at this point of life. If a child is humiliated and shamed for losing bodily control and wetting or dirtying their pants, this can have long-term outcomes. Also, if a child is made to feel insulted for not producing when placed on a toilet, this can also cause difficulty in self-confidence later on.

Of course, toilet training is not the only activity in which children establish their independent controls. During this stage, children often say, "I can do it." "Let me try." and "I want to do it by myself." It's important for parents and caregivers to be patient and encourage the child. It is tempting to want to accomplish a task faster and better than the child can, but this interferes with their growth process.

At this stage, children want to prove to themselves they can participate in the important (at least it seems to them) things of life. They want to prove to themselves and others they have what it takes to participate in their world, they are competent, and they can figure things out. If they don't have the opportunity to explore their capabilities and are discouraged from trying or made fun of for not accomplishing what they set out to do, they may feel they have let others down, as well as themselves.

Stage Three is the delightful era of "I'll try anything!" Having mastered their physical self-control and established their separateness as an individual, they are ready to get things done and conquer the world. These are the great pretending years when nothing is impossible. Children learn as much from their failures as from their successes at this point. Parents and caregivers should be careful to help them create a sense of self competence about their ability to handle whatever comes their way and support them as needed.

At **Stage Four**, a child is production-oriented. Children begin to compare themselves to their peers and seek concrete evidence they are competent in their skills. They are measuring themselves to see how they stack up in their different assets. How many friends do they have? How many trophies have they earned? How does their family compare to others? They want concrete evidence they are as good as or better than others.

Children who don't feel they measure up can become very self-defensive on one hand or withdrawn on the other. The defensive child struggles with receiving feedback, may take to bullying, or be unable to learn from mistakes. The withdrawn child avoids opportunities, shies away from others, and blames him or herself for almost everything.

Caregivers should be very careful about comparisons with other children, even siblings during this time. Comments like these can be very dangerous to their developing self-worth: "Why can't you be more like your sister?" or "All the other boys can do this, why can't you?"

James Fowler's Stages of Faith Development

James Fowler, is a developmental psychologist, a United Methodist layperson, and Director of the Center for Faith Development at Emory University. His work in faith research paved the way for today's serious study in understanding how faith is born, grows, and matures. For Fowler, faith is not limited to Christianity or to religion. It is the orientation of the whole person toward life. Like other developmental theorists, Fowler believes faith is universally present in human beings, and every person progresses through the same series of stages, with one stage building on those before it. There are two stages that are significant in childhood, and one life period Fowler considers to be prior to faith.

To help you understand these stages, we are going to hear from James Fowler as he described these stages in understandable terms.

Straughn, H.K. "Stages of Faith: An Interview with James Fowler.
<http://www.lifespirls.com/TheMindSpiral/Fowler/fowler.html>. Accessed July, 2006.

The script is adapted from the actual interview, retaining Fowler's definitions and using "Straughn" as a character who tries to paraphrase Fowler's ideas.

Straughn: Dr. Fowler, I'd like to begin by asking you to unfold in summary form the stages of faith as your research has developed them.

Fowler: All right. Inevitably this will be sketchy. If we start with infancy—the time from birth to two years—we have what we call undifferentiated faith.

Straughn: So this isn't really *faith* as you understand it?

Fowler: It's a time before language and conceptual thought are possible. The infant is forming a basic sense of trust, of being at home in the world. The infant is also forming what I call pre-images of God or the Holy One, and of the kind of world we live in. On this foundation of basic trust or mistrust is built all that comes later in terms of faith. Future religious experience will either have to confirm or reground that basic trust.

Straughn: This sounds a lot like Kohlberg's first stage. Let's move on to your first stage of faith. You call it *Intuitive/Projective Faith*. What do you mean by that?

Fowler: It characterizes the child of two to six or seven. It's a changing and growing and dynamic faith. It is marked by the rise of imagination. The child doesn't have the kind of logic that makes possible or necessary the questioning of perceptions or fantasies. Therefore the child's mind is "religiously pregnant," one might say. It is striking how many times in our interviews we find that experiences and images that occur and take form before the child is six have powerful and long-lasting effects on the life of faith both positive and negative.

Straughn: So it's intuitive because it's not thought out, or reasoned, or logical necessarily. All the pieces don't necessarily fit together in a way an adult tries to "make sense" of faith. And it's projective because children take their understandings or imaginings and project them on to God. For example, when they hear "God is powerful" they project images they have of power to God. God may be seen as powerful, using the child's understanding of Superman or a Power Ranger's power. How is that different from stage two, which you call *Mythic/Literal Faith*?

Fowler: Here the child develops a way of dealing with the world and making meaning that now criticizes and evaluates the previous stage of imagination and fantasy. The gift of this stage is narrative. The child now can really form and re-tell powerful stories that grasp his or her experiences of meaning. There is a quality of literalness about this. The child is not yet ready to step outside the stories and reflect upon their meanings. The child takes symbols and myths at face value, though they may touch or move him or her at a deeper level.

Straughn: So this is where a child can take a Bible story and begin to understand God's power from examples of how God himself is powerful in the story. God is not Superman. God really created the earth. That's power! And while a child may sense that God's power that created the earth can also mean something to his or her life, the child's mind doesn't have the capacity to understand God's power until he or she experiences something that demonstrates God's power is personal or until he or she moves to a different developmental level. What would that developmental level be?

Fowler: There is a third stage we call synthetic/conventional faith which typically has its rise beginning around age 12 or 13. It's marked by the beginning of what Piaget calls formal operational thinking. That means children now can think independently. It's a time when a person is typically concerned about forming an identity and is deeply concerned about the evaluations and feedback from significant other people in his or her life. We call this a synthetic/conventional stage; synthetic, not in the sense that it's artificial, but in the sense that it's a pulling together of one's valued images and values, the pulling together of a sense of self or identity.

One of the hallmarks of this stage is the tendency to compose its images of God as extensions of interpersonal relationships. God is often experienced as Friend, Companion, and Personal Reality, in relationship to which I'm known deeply and valued. I think the true religious hunger of adolescence is to have a God who knows and values me deeply. God can be a kind of guarantor of my identity and worth in a world where I'm struggling to find who I can be.

Straughn: Thank you, Dr. Fowler, for helping us understand the stages of faith children may be a part of. We understand there are some other, later stages. Because children are not expected to develop further than their cognitive abilities, we will leave that discussion for another class.

Lesson 6: Understanding the Development of Children

Due This Lesson

Completion of Resource 5-5
Reading Resource 5-6
Interview of two children
Completion of Resource 5-8
Reading Resource 5-9
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- reference the Biblical basis for a holistic understanding of human development
 - match the developmental areas to ministry considerations
 - discuss some age-appropriate expectations
 - apply the principles of development into practical applications

Homework Assignments

Using the interviews you conducted last week and your observations, report on how each child shows evidence of each area of development (cognitive, psychosocial, physical, moral, faith). Does the child operate at age-level? How do you know? Are there circumstances in each child's life that influence his or her development for good or may interfere with ongoing development?

Read Resource 6-9.

Complete Resource 6-10.

Read Resource 6-11.

Read Resource 6-12.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Formulate your perspective on different aspects of a child's development and how that will shape your thoughts and ministry to children.

Piaget's Cognitive Developmental Theory

Years of Age	Stage	Description of Child's Thinking
0 – 2	Sensorimotor	I think while I am doing. I learn by touching, sucking, mouthing. If I can't see it, it's not there.
2 – 7	Pre-operational	Egocentric Cannot reverse thinking Cannot recognize that an object's form can be changed without changing its properties Can focus on only one difference at a time Do not generally think in orderly, logical patterns Need concrete items to work out problems
7 – 11	Concrete Operational	More flexible mental manipulations Beginning to think logically Can recognize more than one category at a time (for example, account for both height and weight in determining size) Can begin to see things from other's perspective Can begin to use symbols for real things
11 – Up	Formal Operational	Abstract, flexible, logical Able to form and test multiple hypotheses Can reason contrary to facts Can project outcomes without personal experience

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

<p>LEVEL I – Preconventional Morality</p> <p>Stage 1 – Fear of punishment orientation</p> <p>Stage 2 – “What’s in it for me?” orientation</p>	<p>Children are moral for fear of being punished.</p> <p>Children are moral based upon what they get out of it.</p>
<p>LEVEL II – Conventional Morality</p> <p>Stage 3 – Nice Person orientation</p> <p>Stage 4 – Rules orientation</p>	<p>Children are moral to get approval from others.</p> <p>Children make moral decision based upon established rules.</p>
<p>LEVEL III – Postconventional Morality</p> <p>Stage 5 – Human rights orientation</p> <p>Stage 6 – Universal regard for mankind orientation</p>	<p>Individuals believe that human life is higher than laws, that sometimes laws must be broken to serve mankind.</p> <p>Individuals follow internal principles or standards. Respect for individuals is more important than set rules.</p>

Piaget's Sanctions

Piaget suggests four "sanctions" that are appropriate for shaping moral understanding in children.

1. **Require Restitution.** When children make an error, they must make the error right. For example if a child spills paint, restitution is not accomplished until the child has cleaned up the mess.
2. **Call the children's attention to the consequences of their behavior.** If children are breaking their crayons, the teacher might say, "If you break all of the crayons, you will not have crayons for coloring." Of course, the parent or teacher must be willing to follow through and allow a child to live with the actual consequences.
3. **Deprive the child of what he has misused.** If the child continues to misuse the crayons, the crayons will be removed.
4. **Exclude the child from the group.** This sanction can be used when a child is purposely disrupting a group. The child is asked to leave and may return only when he or she is ready to participate with the group according to the conditions the leader sets.

Erikson's Eight-stage Theory

Age	Basic Conflict	Lifeskill	
Birth to 12 to 18 months	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding	The infant must form a first loving, trusting relationship with the caregiver, or he or she will develop a sense of mistrust towards others and life itself.
18 months to 3 years	Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt	Toilet training	The child's energies are directed toward the development of physical skills, including walking, grasping, and toileting. The child learns control, but he or she may develop a deep sense of unworthiness, or distrust of self if not handled well.
3 to 6 years	Initiative vs. Guilt	Independence	The child continues to become more assertive and to take more initiative, but may be too forceful, leading to guilt feelings.
6 to 12 years	Industry vs. Inferiority	School	The child must deal with demands to learn new skills and practice them successfully or risk a sense of inferiority, failure, and incompetence.
12 to 18 years	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Peer relationships	Teenagers must achieve a sense of their own identity in occupational goals, sex roles, politics, and religion.
19 to 40 years	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love relationships	The young adult must develop intimate relationships or suffer feelings of isolation.
40-65 years	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Giving back	Each individual must discover and work towards leaving his or her mark on the world for the next generation or risk feelings of worthlessness
65 and beyond	Ego integrity vs. Despair	Acceptance of one's life	The final stage of integration of all the previous stages

Fowler's Stages of Faith

<p>Pre-stage: Infancy and Undifferentiated Faith (0-2)</p>	<p>Not language oriented Based on trust development</p>
<p>Stage One: Intuitive-Projective Faith (3-6)</p>	<p>Novel understandings of God Mixing real and imaginary images Concept of God is based on personal experiences with others Not logical or static Relationship with God is primarily as a caretaker</p>
<p>Stage Two: Mythic-Literal Faith (7-12)</p>	<p>Looking for "rules" about God through stories Developing a firm and literal understanding of God Establishing categories of "secular/sacred," "God/Not God," "good people do . . ./bad people do . . ." See relationship with God as reciprocal: "I do this for God and God does that for me."</p>
<p>Stage Three: Synthetic-Conventional Faith (12-20)</p>	<p>Identifying faith with standards of the community Concern about what kind of person faith makes me Ready to apply beliefs to actions without direct experiences See relationship with God as deeply personal: friendship, family</p>
<p>Stage Four: Individuative-Reflective Faith (early adulthood)</p>	<p>Examining standards of the community in order to find a personal faith Struggle between absolutes and relativity Intellectually reflecting on faith, searching for logical order New attention to earlier beliefs Begin to see personal relationship with God as only part of the picture</p>
<p>Stage Five: Conjunctive Faith (middle adulthood)</p>	<p>Bringing together life experience and faith Surrendering need for everything in life to make sense Recognizing personal limitations Concerned with "deeper realities"</p>
<p>Stage Six: Universalizing Faith (after other stages have been realized)</p>	<p>Feeling and experiencing participation in the transformation of existing systems Identifying with all humanity AND with eternal forces</p>

Five Understandings for Age-Appropriate Ministry

1. God is the creator of humanity and is the source of understanding and direction in working with His creation.
2. Every human being was born with the capacity to grow in many different ways.
3. There are patterns of growth that we can identify.
4. Growth is influenced by environmental conditions, relationships, and inborn characteristics and timetables.
5. In order to effectively get the outcomes we desire, we must work with developmental characteristics—not against them.

Matching Needs to Ministry

Infants

	Because infants . . .	The church should . . .
1	are establishing lifelong foundations of trust	make sure that all nursery care is prompt, emotionally warm, and consistent
2	process information through touch and movement	provide opportunities for appropriate loving touch, holding, and movement
3	are developing language	speak about God, his love and care
4	are bonding to their significant others	expect separation anxiety (from parents) and stranger anxiety (to strangers), and attempt to staff with as much consistency as possible
5	are developing at a rapid pace	adapt their activities to constantly changing needs for safety and stimulation
6	express different needs with different cries	
7	copy adult actions	
8	explore everything	

Toddlers

	Because toddlers . . .	The church should . . .
1	are learning boundaries	provide a physical environment that minimizes conflict about where a child can go and what he or she can do
2	are toilet training	have a child-size potty and enough staff to take individual children to the bathroom
3	love to do things by themselves	support children to try what they want to try and help only when the child becomes frustrated
4	are learning a standard of conduct	work with children rather than telling them what to do (pick up toys together, do art together, etc.)
5	love to keep moving	don't expect toddlers to sit in a group for Bible stories, but tell short Bible stories with movement to individuals or small groups
6	play side by side but not with other children	
7	lack self-control	
8	are learning to use toys	

Preschoolers

	Because preschoolers . . .	The church should . . .
1	are excited about learning	help children learn to pay attention to small group teaching experiences
2	love to help	allow children to have opportunities for serving and giving to others
3	are learning to share	help children to work out solutions to conflict rather than punishing
4	love stories	tell Bible stories, with pictures and snuggling as appropriate
5	focus on one element of a story and relate it to personal experiences	capitalize on their fascination and imagination to "get into" the story. For example, the child thinks about going fishing with Grandpa when he hears about Jonah and the big fish. He can compare the size of the fish Grandpa caught with the idea of a fish that could swallow Jonah!
6	can easily feel guilty for "bothering" grown-ups	
7	are comforted by routine	
8	have not developed small-motor skills (are often awkward with pencils, scissors, etc.)	

Early Elementary Students

	Because early elementary students . . .	The church should . . .
1	are learning rules for behavior	help children understand how rules can be applied fairly, consistently, and with grace
2	are eager to receive adult praise	find opportunities to recognize and appreciate children
3	like responsibilities they can handle	provide opportunities for them to help with different tasks in the church
4	define things by their purpose	understand they may relate to God more because of what God does than by who God is
5	are often not yet reading with skill	not expect children to seek out their own Bible verses or read publicly unless they offer to do so
6	may need adult guidance to start a new task	
7	understand language better than they can express themselves	
8	may still require rest after high energy play	

Older Elementary Students

	Because older elementary students . . .	The church should . . .
1	are developing intense loyalty to friends	provide opportunities for children to establish friendships to children and others in the church through social events, as well as through classes
2	are eager to try to do things their own way	allow children opportunities for self-expression in tasks, modeling when asked. (For example, tell the rules to a game and let children play it themselves. They still will enjoy your participation, but sometimes they may not initially want it)
3	are beginning to develop a view about social and global issues	explain how the church is active outside its walls, and provide opportunities for participation in those activities
4	enjoy small peer-dominated discussions	let them discuss Bible lessons in small groups
5	may be entering puberty	support parents in dealing with their growing children, and help them to become comfortable talking about sexual temptations
6	are looking for truths from science and other sources to validate their faith	
7	ask many questions and desire thoughtful answers	
8	enjoy humor	

A Child Explains God

“Danny Dutton Explains God” Written by Danny Dutton, from Chula Vista, California, for his homework assignment to “Explain God.”²²

Read Danny’s essay and look for evidence of Danny’s developmental level in each of the developmental domains.

- Underline sentences that show his level of cognitive function.
- Circle sentences that show his psychosocial development.
- Put a box around sentences that show his level of faith development.
- Create another symbol to mark sentences that relate to his moral development.

One of God’s main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn’t make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way, He doesn’t have to take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk, He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God’s second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times besides bedtime. God doesn’t have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because He hears everything there must be a terrible lot of noise in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn’t go wasting His time by going over your mom and dad’s head asking for something they said you couldn’t have.

Atheists are people who don’t believe in God. I don’t think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren’t any who come to our church.

Jesus is God’s Son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn’t want to learn about God. They finally got tired of Him preaching to them and they crucified Him. But He was good and kind like His Father and He told His Father that they didn’t know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said OK. His Dad (God) appreciated everything that He had done and all His hard work on earth so He told Him He didn’t have to go out on the road anymore, He could stay in heaven. So He did. And now He helps His Dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones He can take care of Himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary only more important. You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to hear you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the times. You should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there’s anybody you want to make happy, it’s God. Don’t skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong! And, besides, the sun doesn’t come out at the beach until noon anyway.

If you don’t believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can’t go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He’s around you when you’re scared in the dark or when you can’t swim very good and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids. But you shouldn’t just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and He can take me back anytime He pleases.

And that’s why I believe in God.
My Best,
Danny

Ten Key Principles of Learning

1. Learners need feedback.

Teachers need feedback, too. This is one reason teachers must be learning as they teach. The basis of feedback is questions to clarify understanding and evaluate performance. Children must have opportunity to ask questions and get feedback on their assumptions.

2. Learners seek patterns and categories based on their previous experiences.

The more we can help learners tie the new knowledge to things they already know, the more easily they will learn. In fact, all learning is based on prior experience, with each new bit of information connecting to something learned previously. Novelist Doris Lessing defines learning like this: You suddenly understand something you've understood your whole life, but in a different way.²³ It's not different with children—their life experience is just a little shorter!

3. Learners make use of models.

Demonstrations and examples help learners understand expectations. But modeling is not only physical. It is also social. We learn from teacher examples, watching peers and others, and adjusting our behavior to fit with it. Children learn from watching people do things and from sensing their attitudes.

4. Learners benefit from multiple methods used in combination.

Multiple methods do two important things. They allow us to communicate with more learners more effectively. Offering two or more ways of teaching offers students another advantage. Each activity reinforces what a learner might have already learned the first time.

5. Learners need repetition and reinforcement for learning to become permanent.

Repetition doesn't necessarily mean rote recall or repeating the same thing the same way. Learners benefit when they can apply the same information in multiple ways. Wouldn't it be sad if a baby thought he or she could only walk from Mommy to Daddy and didn't learn the skill of walking to the couch, to school, or to the store?

6. Learning occurs more readily and on deeper levels if the learning is based on active engagement of the learner, and not on receiving alone.

Children don't just absorb, they are constantly *assimilating* and *accommodating* new information, to use Piaget's language from the last lesson.

7. Learning occurs more readily and on deeper levels if there is a need for the knowledge and the new knowledge is put into use immediately.

Need establishes a readiness to learn. You *need* to learn how people learn so you can be an effective teacher. Whenever a situation from a child's life is demanding an explanation or a new skill, he or she is ready to learn.

8. Learning is most effective when the experiences involve an emotional component.

This can include the emotion of a pleasant environment or experience. This can also involve relationships. Relationships are emotional by definition, and we respond emotionally to both peers and teachers, as well as to situations. For children, this also means the learning environment should be both safe and fun.

9. Depth of learning requires personal reflection and application.

Take a moment and think about what you have learned thus far in this module and how you have applied it to your ministry.

10. Learners learn best when there are high expectations, communicated clearly. These expectations must be reasonable.

If a learner is being asked to give time and energy to learning it must be worth the time. They must be expected to learn at the highest level of their abilities, with the expectations clearly stated, with appropriate learning activities, with timely feedback.

Learning Preferences

Environmental Preferences

On the line between the terms, mark whether you have a stronger preference for the term on the left or the term on the right.

Quiet _____ Background Noise
 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Bright Lighting _____ Soft Lighting
 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Warm _____ Cool
 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Formal Study Setting _____ Informal Room Design
 (Desk, chair, clean space) (stuffed chair, floor)
 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Social Preferences

Which is your first, second, third, fourth, and fifth choice for work assignments?

Working alone	1	2	3	4	5
Working in pairs	1	2	3	4	5
Working in a team	1	2	3	4	5
Working with an authority figure	1	2	3	4	5
Working in a variety of groupings	1	2	3	4	5

Physical Preferences (learning modalities)

Which is your first second, third, and fourth most comfortable and memorable way of learning?

Visual (eyes)	1	2	3	4
Auditory (ears)	1	2	3	4
Kinesthetic (movement)	1	2	3	4
Tactile (touch)	1	2	3	4

Emotional Elements

Give yourself a score for each of the following, with one being low and five being high.

Motivation	1	2	3	4	5
Persistence	1	2	3	4	5
Responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
Need for external structure	1	2	3	4	5

Cognitive/Psychological Elements

Mark where you fall on the scale between the two elements

Thinking _____ Intuition
5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Flexible _____ Rigid
5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Detailed _____ Global
5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Ready _____ Or Not??
5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

While there are many inventories to help you measure your levels in each of these areas, they rely on your perceptions of yourself, your strengths, and weaknesses. These traits are not "good" or "bad" in themselves. People tend to be most comfortable with others who have similar processing patterns. They must work harder to communicate with those who are different from themselves. As teachers, understanding your own patterns is essential to being able to reach out to others.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

Linguistic intelligence or word smart

A gift for using languages to understand and express ideas

When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess" (Deut 32:45-47).

Logical-mathematical intelligence or logic smart

A gift for seeing cause and effect and manipulating mathematical concepts

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows (Mt 10:29-31).

Spatial intelligence or picture smart

A gift for making representations of the physical world in one's mind and sometimes for others (such as pictures or sculpture)

*Yet, O Lord, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
We are all the work of your hand (Is 64:8).*

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence or body smart

A gift for using one's own body

David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might (2 Sam 6:14).

Musical intelligence or music smart

A gift for using musical rhythm and tone patterns

*He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
and put their trust in the Lord (Ps 40:3).*

Interpersonal intelligence or people smart

A gift for understanding others

The king said, "This one says, 'My son is alive and your son is dead,' while that one says, 'No! Your son is dead and mine is alive.' "

Then the king said, "Bring me a sword." So they brought a sword for the king. He then gave an order: "Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other."

The woman whose son was alive was filled with compassion for her son and said to the king, "Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!"

But the other said, "Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!"

Then the king gave his ruling: "Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother" (1 Ki 3:23-27).

Intrapersonal intelligence or self smart

A gift for understanding one's own inner workings

*The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters,
but a man of understanding draws them out (Pro 20:5).*

Naturalist intelligence or nature smart

A gift for perceiving patterns and classifying, usually in the natural realm but sometimes in manufactured items, as well

He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near" (Lk 21:29-30).

Four Other Learning Styles Models

Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI)

This method classifies students in terms of their relative preferences for thinking in four different modes based on the task-specialized functioning of the physical brain.

The four modes or quadrants in this classification scheme are:

- *Quadrant A* (left brain, cerebral). Logical, analytical, quantitative, factual, critical
- *Quadrant B* (left brain, limbic). Sequential, organized, planned, detailed, structured
- *Quadrant C* (right brain, limbic). Emotional, interpersonal, sensory, kinesthetic, symbolic
- *Quadrant D* (right brain, cerebral). Visual, holistic, innovative

Felder-Silverman Learning Style Model²⁴

This model classifies students as:

- *sensing learners* (concrete, practical, oriented toward facts and procedures) or *intuitive learners* (conceptual, innovative, oriented toward theories and meanings)
- *visual learners* (prefer visual representations of presented material--pictures, diagrams, flow charts) or *verbal learners* (prefer written and spoken explanations)
- *inductive learners* (prefer presentations that proceed from the specific to the general) or *deductive learners* (prefer presentations that go from the general to the specific)
- *active learners* (learn by trying out things, working with others) or *reflective learners* (learn by thinking through things, working alone)
- *sequential learners* (linear, orderly, learn in small incremental steps) or *global learners* (holistic, systems thinkers, learn in large leaps)

Gregorc's Learning Styles

Anthony Gregorc's "Style Delineator Approach" is based on studies into the functions of the left and right brain hemispheres. His system of learning takes into account the different ways of perceiving and ordering information. We either perceive things in methods that are concrete-oriented (from our physical senses) or abstract-oriented (from logical, deductive reasoning). Ordering is making sense out of what we perceive. Ordering can either be sequential (organized, systematic) or random (unorganized).

These different means of perceiving and ordering information form Gregorc's four categories of learning styles:

Concrete-Sequential	Learning is linear and sequential, somewhat rigid.
Concrete-Random	Learning is concrete and intuitive, and the person thrives on problem solving.
Abstract-Sequential	Learning is abstract and analytical, and the person thrives on a mentally challenging but ordered learning environment.
Abstract-Random	The person is emotional and imaginative, and prefers an active, interesting, and informal learning environment.

Bernice McCarthy's 4-MAT Model²⁵

- Type One learners are primarily interested in personal meaning. Teachers need to create a Reason.
- Type Two Learners are primarily interested in the facts as they lead to conceptual understanding. Teachers need to Give Them Facts that deepen understanding.
- Type Three Learners are primarily interested in how things work. Teachers need to Let Them Try It.
- Type Four Learners are primarily interested in self discovery. Teachers need to Let Them Teach It to Themselves and Others.

Lesson 7: How Children Learn

Due This Lesson

Analysis from previous interview
Reading Resource 6-9
Completion of Resource 6-10
Reading Resource 6-11
Reading Resource 6-12
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- explain ten key principles of learning
 - understand the concepts of learning styles and multiple intelligences
 - identify your own preferences as a learner and begin to understand how these preferences affect your teaching

Homework Assignments

Arrange with a teacher or children's minister in advance to observe a children's Sunday school classroom or worship service. You will not be teaching so you can be focused on your goals. Observe different children, and determine what their learning style might be. Do not be discouraged if at first the learners' preferences are not apparent. For some it would take several classes to determine this. However, you should be able to spot some obvious characteristics emerging. Take notes on what you see and your perception of how the teaching process fits their learning style. Write a two-page paper on your experience and conclusions.

Read Resource 7-3.

Complete Resource 7-4.

Read Resource 7-5.

Read Resource 7-6.

Read Resource 7-7.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section on what you believe your learning style is and how you see this influencing your ministry.

Kolb's Learning Style Model

This model classifies students as having a preference for:

- *concrete experience* or *abstract conceptualization* (how they take information in)
- *active experimentation* or *reflective observation* (how they internalize information).

Type 1: Concrete Reflective associated with "feeling"

Question: Why?

Teacher as Motivator

Type 2: Abstract Reflective associated with "watching"

Question: What?

Teacher as Expert

Type 3: Abstract Active associated with "thinking"

Question: How?

Teacher as Coach

Type 4: Concrete Active associated with "doing"

Question: What if?

Teacher as Resource or one who plays alongside

More on Kolb:

Kolb's work also suggests an order of learning in which 'immediate or concrete experiences' (activities) provide opportunities for 'observations and reflections'. These 'observations and reflections' are assimilated or accommodated into 'abstract concepts' (ideas) that can be 'actively tested' in turn creating new experiences to observe and reflect on.

Capehart/Niles Learner Style Strategies²⁶

When choosing and using these strategies, match the developmental level of the students with the complexity of the strategy.



THE LOOKER

Present yourself as:

- Straightforward
- Step-by-step
- Practical
- Appreciative of their viewpoint
- Account for their mind pictures
- Use gestures
- Use written or drawn cues
- Demonstrate and model

Use this vocabulary:

- I'm *looking* to see ...
- I *see* that...
- Look* in your Bible to see God's *view* of...

Use this body language:

- Smile
- Use direct eye contact
- Relaxed posturing

Keep the Environment:

- Orderly
- Attractive
- Organized

Tools to Use:

- Art supplies
- Posters
- Pictures and picture books
- Posted rules
- Written directions
- Visual tokens of appreciation and affirmation (stickers, stamps, happy faces, displays of their work)

Directive Words

- Draw
- Design
- Illustrate
- Write
- Sculpt
- Diagram
- Paint
- Color-code
- Highlight
- Match
- Cartoon

Sample Activities: (for kids to do)

- Do a photo essay about . . .
- Find a picture that reminds you of . . .
- Draw the expression on the face of [this character in this situation].
- Arrange these objects to show . . .
- Create a T-shirt design to represent . . .
- Make a costume for . . .
- Choose a color to represent . . .
- Position people to show . . . (this is like a human sculpture or freeze frame)
- Set up a display window for . . .
- Watch a video segment without the sound and decide how what's happening in the video relates to the lesson . . .
- Make a picture outline. . . .
- Draw this verse in picture form (rebus . . .
- Create a trading card for . . . (A Bible character, a fruit of the Spirit, each of the plagues of Egypt)
- Design a symbol or logo for . . .
- Write and illustrate a children's book about . . .
- Make a transparency of . . ., then project it onto the wall
- Create a book cover for the book of (Genesis, Psalms, John, etc.)
- Design a modern home for (Adam, Moses, or Paul)
- Sculpt a statue in honor of . . .
- Create one item to hang on a mobile for each part of the story . . .
- Add your own visually stimulating activities . . .



THE TALKER

Present yourself as:

- Conversational
- Reassuring
- Low-pressure
- Appreciative of their state-of-readiness
- Ask for their input
- Offer frequent feedback.
- Seek and point out commonality.
- Allow for response time.

Use this vocabulary:

- I *hear* you saying...
- I'm *listening* to find
- It *sounds* as though...

Use this body language:

- Regulated voice
- Friendly tones
- Open and responsive

Keep the Environment:

- Filled with "white noise" or classical music
- Open to sharing
- Organized

Tools to Use:

- Cooperative projects/peer interaction
- Discussion questions
- Tape recorder
- Tape or CD player and music
- Frequent oral review (Let them restate the direction.)
- Verbal affirmations and feedback, public recognition

Directive Words

- Share
- Say
- Discuss
- Compose
- Write a script
- Sing
- Make up a chant or rhyme
- Interview
- Ask
- Tell
- Whisper
- Mouth the words

Activity Starters for the Talker:

- What song reminds you of . . . ?
- Write a puppet skit about the conversation between . . .
- What do you think [character's name] might have wanted to say when . . . ?
- Talk about _____ for one minute without stopping.
- Say everything you know about _____ before I ring the bell.
- Summarize the message of the story of _____ for a bumper sticker.
- Write a song about _____ to the tune of a familiar nursery rhyme or chorus.
- What words describe [Bible character, place, or event]?
- What tone of voice do you think [character] used when he said . . . ?
- Choose background music for...
- Pretend you are [character] and describe your feelings when . . .
- What sounds do you think [character] heard when . . .
- What would you like to say to . . . ?
- What questions would you like to ask each character in the story?
- Make a tape interviewing [a character in a Bible story].
- Create sound effects while someone reads the story aloud.
- Plan a news report from . . . [Story location]
- What would you like to teach [character]?
- What do you think God would say about . . . ?
- Pretend you are a lawyer. Make your opening argument for . . .
- Add your own auditory stimulating activities . . .



The Explorer

Present yourself as:

- Flexible (within your limits)
- Non-dogmatic
- Tolerant of options
- Focused on end result, not process (Let them experiment.)
- Accounts for their sense of humor
- Present optional plans
- Appreciate enthusiasm
- Demonstrate and model

Use this vocabulary:

- I'm *touched* by what you said . . .
- Hold* that thought . . .
- Do you have a *grip on* that concept?

Use this body language:

- Appropriate Touch
- Proximity

Keep the Environment:

- Full of quiet items to manipulate
- Open
- Flexible

Tools to Use:

- Open space
- 3-D art and building materials
- Sports equipment
- Multisensory items (interesting textures and substances, cooking projects)
- Time to create
- Frequent oral review of directions, allowing them to restate them
- Tangible rewards and affirmation (Free time, parties, hugs, enthusiastic praise) of their work)

Directive Words

- Experiment with
- Act Out
- Feel
- Touch
- Find
- Act like...
- Move
- Stand by
- Arrange
- Play with

Activity Starters:

- Touch something in the room that reminds you of . . .
- Create a moving figure to represent . . .
- Come up with a game that shows . . .
- Make a snack that . . .
- What sport best illustrates . . .? Why?
- Use these toys to re-create . . .
- Move the furniture so the classroom is like . . .
- Move your body like [character] did when . . .
- Role play . . .
- Make your face look like . . .
- Build a model of . . .
- Repeat one (word of the verse, important idea) each time you (catch the ball, take a step) . . .
- Create a different action for each detail of the story about . . .
- Retell the story without words.
- Create motions to help you remember this Bible verse . . .
- Find props to use for the story of . . . (Let everyone handle the props.)
- Play charades to express this concept . . .
- Act out exaggerated details of the story about (For example, imagine what the sand must have felt like against the Israelites' feet and move as you imagine they did.)
- Work as a group to form . . . [Noah's ark, the stormy sea, the Ten commandments]
- Do this experiment . . . How is this like [the Bible message]?
- Add your own kinesthetically stimulating activities . . .



THE THINKER

Present yourself as:

- Well-documented
- Linear
- Logical
- Reasonable
- Goal-oriented
- Factual
- Not threatened by their questions
- Account for their need for corroborating evidence.
- Give think time and wait time

Use this vocabulary:

- How many . . .*
- When and where . . .*
- First, next, then . . .*

Use this body language:

- Distance
- Eye-contact
- Personal gestures (nods, thumbs up)

Keep the Environment:

- Orderly
- Resource rich
- Quiet

Tools to Use:

- Additional information and interesting "tidbits"
- Resource materials
- Maps
- Charts of data
- Opportunities for ongoing projects
- Affirmation by recognizing expertise and specific contributions, private recognition

Directive Words

- Group
- List
- Categorize
- Map
- Graph
- Chart
- Organize
- Plan
- Analyze
- Figure out
- Recite
- Memorize

Activity Starters

- Use the map to determine . . . (two different possible routes, the distance between . . .)
- Use the map to determine what modern countries now occupy the lands we are discussing . . .
- How is ____ like ____?
- List all the ____ mentioned in the Scripture passage . . .
- Find five times Jesus mentioned . . .
- Put the events of the story in chronological order . . .
- Make a timeline to show . . .
- Gather evidence to defend . . .
- List the events that led to . . .
- What might happen if [character] did the same thing today?
- Tell three things that were wrong about . . .
- Compare these two similar Scripture passages or Bible stories . . .
- Write a set of rules or directions for . . . (certain Biblical characters or groups)
- What was [character's] biggest mistake?
- How are you like . . .? How are you different?
- Name all the . . .
- What happened as a result of . . .?
- How many times did . . .?
- What questions would you have asked if you were . . .?
- Create your own quantitative or research provoking activities . . .

The King and His Two Sons²⁷

Once there was a king who wanted his two sons to grow up to be courteous, well-mannered gentlemen. In their youth, their behavior made the king wonder if they would ever reach such a goal.

He challenged the boys with this proposition: Suppose a man wanted his son to become a gentleman. Could he make a gentleman of him by proper training and education?

The first son answered, "Of course! Train him right, and the father could make whatever he wants out of the boy."

The second son declared, "No, you are wrong. No amount of training would produce a gentleman."

The king, seeing that they disagreed, gave the boys a month to think and study. Then he would summon them to appear before him, and each would try to prove his case. The one who proved his case would be given his father's throne when the king died.

The first son decided to think it over by meditating in a tavern. He ordered a drink (probably Coca-Cola). To his surprise, he saw that his drink was served to him by a cat—a cat dressed in a waiter's uniform, walking on its back legs. Aha! If you can train a cat to be a waiter . . . ! The first son knew he had the winning argument. He purchased the trained cat from the tavern owner. It cost him plenty; but he could afford it, because soon he would be the king!

The second son saw what had happened. He thought his brother had won the argument and would soon wear the king's crown. However, the second son wanted to be king. But how could he compete with a cat trained as a waiter—and a good one at that?

One day, as the second son walked sadly down the street, he saw something that made him smile.

The day came for the hearing before the king. The first son presented his trained cat. The cat was dressed in royal attire, walked on its back legs, and daintily served the king a plate of three chocolates. Next, the elegant, trained cat was to serve the king hot tea.

Just as the cat approached the king with the steaming potion, the second son opened a bag and emptied the contents on the floor. Five frightened mice went running for cover. The elegant, trained cat dropped the tea, scalding the king. On all fours, the cat pounced on the nearest mouse, snarling and growling and gobbling its favorite food!

Defining Spiritual Formation

The idea of spiritual formation emerges out of Galatians 4:19. Paul writes: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until *Christ is formed in you.*"

Write your own definition of Spiritual Formation.

Spiritual Discipline List

Dallas Willard, author of *Reformation of the Heart*, says that there is no complete list of spiritual disciplines.

Disciplines are not a formula, but “something in my power that I do to enable me to do what I cannot do by direct effort [become like Christ].”²⁸

Disciplines of Letting Go or Abstinence

In these practices, we *stop* doing something in order to work Christlike character into our lives.

- Solitude: Spending time alone to be with God.
- Silence: Removing noisy distractions to hear from God.
- Slowing Down: Putting ourselves in situations where we have to move at a slower pace to break the hurriedness in our lives. Most commonly, this is practiced as Sabbath-keeping.
- Fasting: Skipping a meal(s) (or abstaining from an activity or attitude) to find greater nourishment from God. Fasting forces us to let God fill the needs being met by that particular activity.
- Secrecy: Avoiding self-promotion, practicing serving God without others knowing.
- Frugality/Sacrifice/Simplicity: Choosing to live with less money or material assets, meeting basic needs so that your resources are more available for God’s purposes.

Disciplines of Activity/Engagement

In these practices, we intentionally *engage in* activities that nurture our souls and strengthen us for the race ahead.

- Study/Meditation: Spending time reading the Scriptures and meditating on its meaning and importance in our lives in order to cleanse our bodies and minds.
- Scripture Memorization: Memorizing the Bible in order to “store it in our hearts” and transform our thoughts.
- Worship: Offering praise and adoration to God in order to give our lives perspective.
- Prayer: Talking and listening to God about your relationship with Him and your needs, feelings, frustrations and desires in order to learn how to trust Him as your source and provider.
- Thankfulness: Recognizing blessings in all of life and expressing gratitude to God and to others for their gifts.
- Fellowship: Mutual caring and ministry in the body of Christ through committed, accountable relationships. This includes bearing each others’ burdens, sharing each others’ joys, and enjoying others’ company in both celebration and the mundane events of life.
- Confession: Regularly confessing your sins and failures to the Lord and other trusted individuals in order to experience God’s forgiveness and cleansing.
- Submission: Humbling yourself before God and others while seeking accountability in relationships. This is consciously choosing to honor another’s authority.
- Hospitality: Sharing ourselves and our personal resources, inviting others to participate in our lives through intentional acts of serving.

Modeling Prayer

Engaging in a variety of prayers helps us model to our students a willingness to meet God in every situation in our lives. If we are willing to model fun, engaging, real-life prayer to children, we help them to see themselves as effective communicators with God from their earliest days.

In the nursery, we pray with babies as we thank God for their cheeks and bellies. We praise God by clapping our hands, stomping our feet, and raising our arms. We pray over the babies' anxiety when their mommies leave. We give prayer words to their experience, "Jesus hears Max's cries and see his tears. God, help him feel better." And we can share that prayer life with families by doing something as simple as placing a sticker on a child's back that says, "I was prayed for . . . today." Make sure every baby gets a sticker, but don't put it on their backs until it is true!

Pray with preschoolers, using books with simple pictures they can identify. For example, an animal book is perfect! Hold up the first page, and say, "Thank You, God, for ducks." Before you turn the page, say, "Thank you God for . . ." Then turn the page and encourage the children to shout out the name of the next animal. We can pray memorized prayers with them. Far from being meaningless, this simple act helps to establish times to pause in their day, such as snack time, naptime, and bedtime. We can pray whisper prayers with folded hands and shouting prayers with eyes wide open. We can go around the circle and ask each child to tell one thing for which he or she is grateful. Encourage all the children to join in with "Thank You, thank You, God."

With elementary students, you can go on a prayer scavenger hunt in your neighborhood, looking for things that indicate a need for prayer. For example, a tricycle in the yard might indicate a need to pray for a child who lives in the church neighborhood, but he or she has never come to Sunday School. You can engage in times of complete silence encouraging personal prayer (about 1.5-2 minutes seems like a long time to a child, but you can stretch this out to a length of a short instrumental song if you are encouraging and not harsh about it). You can pray M&M™ prayers, where each candy a child removes from the bag reminds him or her of something to pray about. You can make prayer time exciting by counting down to prayer with the last word being "bow" instead of blast-off, followed by complete silence.

These "prayer adventures" may be of little significance and may feel quite ineffective or insecure if you are not willing to expand your own prayer life with new ways of praying. This can include prayer journaling, praying with your eyes open to nature, silence as prayer (listening), partner praying (conversational prayer), praying scripture, or other kinds of prayer that may not be familiar to you.

Goals of Spiritual Mentorship

1. **To Have True Christian Fellowship.** It is not unusual for ministers in a church to feel all alone in terms of intimate Christian fellowship. Ministers may feel that, if they expose a weakness or a struggle to a friend at church, they will lose respect or compromise their leadership ability. A mentor gives you a safe place to be real about the issues of your life without fear of rejection or hindrance to your ministry.
2. **To Keep You Accountable.** One characteristic of a spiritual mentor is to be frank and honest. That means that this person will confront you in love when necessary. When you are involved in things that might come back to hurt you later or even may have the appearance of impropriety, your spiritual mentor can help you see this. For example, if you are a female and you have been meeting with the father of one of the children in your office with the door closed, your spiritual mentor might suggest leaving the door open slightly or to have another female adult or your husband meet with him as well. Even though you know nothing is going on, if questions surface later, you will be glad that no one can use that against you. The key aspect to mentorship being successful is your ability to be 100 percent honest. You must honestly want help to see what is in your blind spots.

One area of accountability that should be addressed is sexual temptation. It is not surprising any more to hear the news of another scandal. Many situations arise in ministry that lead to unique emotional intimacy that can easily be misinterpreted as having sexual overtones. Do not put yourself in situations that can lead to your own spiritual demise. Set standards for interacting with the opposite sex, and stick to them.

Whatever circumstances arise, YOU, as a minister of the gospel, are always responsible for a relationship that gets out of control. As a spiritual leader, you cannot ever allow a relationship to become inappropriate. The only way you can insure you will not "fall" into temptation is to take preventative steps to avoid temptation. For some, this means taking extra precautions so your computer is "open screen," and extra filters are in place. For others, it means taking the precaution of keeping doors open.

Knowing you have a spiritual mentor who will ask you whether you are maintaining your standards can give you the reason to take the extra step of caution, even before you sense temptation.

3. **To Help You Grow and Mature Spiritually.** Your spiritual mentor should check with you about your practices of spiritual discipline, be willing to pray and search the Scriptures with you, and be a resource for advice on issues of spiritual growth.
4. **To Be a Model for You.** Your mentor should model appropriate interactions, values, and relationships as an ongoing example of Christlikeness. There is a part of your mentor that will become a part of you as he or she models Christ for you and in response to you.
5. **To Be Your Support or Advocate.** It may be helpful to have someone who is loved and respected in the church to go to bat for you sometimes. Your mentor does not have to be from your church, but if he or she is, it can be helpful to have someone support you and stand by you because they know the process you have gone through in making a decision.

Lesson 8: Spiritual Formation

Due This Lesson

Two-page paper
Reading Resource 7-3
Completion of Resource 7-4
Reading Resources 7-5—7-7
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- identify significant characteristics of lifelong spiritual formation
 - assume responsibility for pursuing the spiritual disciplines of studying scripture, prayer, and taking a Sabbath, as well as finding other disciplines that are meaningful to their spiritual growth
 - explore the role and purpose of a spiritual mentor

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page paper on how you spiritually care for yourself. This is not a paper on your ideal, but your actual day-to-day process. Include in this paper if you actually experience a Sabbath (Day of rest). If so, how does it work? What is your prayer life and Bible reading time like? Describe your times of private worship? Are you in a mentoring relationship? Are you in an accountability group? These are areas of suggestion, and the paper does not have to be limited just to these areas. The idea is to begin to take a serious look at your own spiritual health.

Write a letter to a person who has been a spiritual influence on your life and thank him or her for what that influence has meant to you. Send the letter this week. You will submit a piece of paper next week with your name and the date when you sent your letter.

Read Resource 8-7.

Read Resource 8-8.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section on your own spiritual formation, what has formed you in the past and what you see as your needs for growth now and in the future.

Scripture Study and Meditation

The Informational Approach

Tremper Longman's seven principles of Bible study:²⁹

1. Attempt to discover the author's intended meaning.
2. Read the Bible passage in the context that it was intended.
3. What type of passage is it you are reading?
4. Consider the historical and cultural setting of the time.
5. Look carefully at the grammar and structure within the passage. In other words, if you run into a "therefore," see what it is "there for."
6. Be careful to interpret your experiences in the light of Scripture, not the other way around.
7. Always seek to understand what the entire Bible says concerning a particular theme.

You can access many resources online at sites such as www.biblegateway.com, <http://bible.crosswalk.com>, and <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bible/>. Enter a search term such as "Bible resources online."

Scripture Study and Meditation

The Transformational Approach

Explorer's Method

1. Explore the words themselves

For GOD so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

For God so loved the WORLD that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life

For God so loved the world that he GAVE his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life

For God so loved the world that he gave his ONLY begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life

For God so loved the world that he gave his only BEGOTTEN son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life

2. Look for the main idea.
3. What else does the Bible say about this idea?
4. Meditate on the passage. Why was it good for me to read this today?
5. Apply the passage: How should this affect my life today?

The Being There Method

Try to imagine being a participant in the passage.

- If there are characters, imagine what it would have been like to be one of the characters.
- If the passage is speaking to a group of people, try to take on the thoughts and experiences with which these individuals might have been dealing.
- Imagine the environment.

- How do you feel?
- What would you have said in response?
- Is there a particular part of the passage that you resist or embrace? Why?
- Does “being there” give you any new insights into the significance of the passage?
- Stepping back into your own time and being yourself, what would you like to say to God about this passage?

The Formational Approach

Ask yourself questions that help you understand better your relationship with God and how your time in God’s Word influences your relationships with others. Here are some questions to get you started:

1. How do I experience God the Father in this passage?
2. How do I experience Jesus Christ in this passage?
3. How do I experience the Holy Spirit in this passage?
4. Is the passage discussing behavior to avoid?
5. Are there commands I am to obey?
6. Is there a promise I can hold on to today?
7. Is there something the passage can teach me about myself?
8. Should I memorize this passage?
9. Do I need to share this with anyone else? Who?
10. If I really believed this verse, how would my life be different?

The heart of spiritual formation, the reading of the Bible, must be both informational and transformational in order for it to be formational. The equation looks like this:

$$\begin{array}{rclcl}
 \text{Informational} & + & \text{Transformational} & = & \text{Formational} \\
 \text{Analytical/Judgmental} & + & \text{Cleansing/Purifying} & = & \text{Relational/Loving}
 \end{array}$$

A Model for Prayer

The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6 New Living Translation

We recognize both His close relationship and His amazing holiness.	"Our father in heaven, may your name be honored."
We speak of our dependence on His infinite wisdom to rule over the situations of our lives.	"May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven."
We speak of our real and present needs.	"Give us our food for today."
We speak of our failures.	"and forgive us our sins,"
We speak of our attitudes about being wronged.	"just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us."
We acknowledge that life is hard, and there are forces beyond what we can see with the eye.	"And don't let us yield to temptation, but deliver us from evil."
We express our faith in God's infinite and eternal purposes.	"For yours is the kingdom and power and the glory forever. Amen."

The Discipline of Prayer

The Prayer of St. Philaret

My Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of Thee.
Thou and Thou alone knowest my needs.
Thou lovest me more than I am able to love Thee.
O Father, grant unto me, Thy servant, all which I cannot ask.
For a cross I dare not ask, nor for consolation;
I dare only to stand in Thy presence.
My heart is open to Thee.
Thou seest my needs of which I myself am unaware.
Behold and lift me up!
In Thy presence I stand,
awed and silenced by Thy will and Thy judgments,
into which my mind cannot penetrate.
To Thee I offer myself as a sacrifice.
No other desire is mine but to fulfill Thy will.
Teach me how to pray.
Do Thyself pray within me.
Amen.

Types of Prayer

- Blessing—Numbers 6:24
- Adoration—Ephesians 3:20
- Petition—Colossians 4:12
- Asking forgiveness—Luke 18:13
- Intercession—John 17
- Thanksgiving—Psalm 75:1; 2 Corinthians 9:15
- Praise—Psalm 8
- Healing—James 5:14-16
- Waiting—Habakkuk 2:1
- Consecration—Psalm 51:10-17

Body Positions for Prayer

- Standing—1 Kings 8:22; Mark 11:25
- Bowing down—Psalm 138:1-3
- Kneeling—2 Chronicles 6:13; Luke 22:41; Acts 20:36
- Falling on the face—Numbers 16:22; Joshua 5:14; Matthew 26:39
- Spreading forth the hands—1 Kings 8:38-39
- Lifting up the hands—Psalm 28:2; Lamentations 2:19; 1 Timothy. 2:8

A Spiritual Mentor

1. A well-established Christian. You need a mentor who has journeyed the road ahead and can lead you through difficult terrain.
2. A good reputation and a strong character.
3. Has studied and knows the Scriptures.
4. Someone of the same gender who is competent in theology and skilled and loving in relationships.
5. Embraces the history of the Christian faith.
6. Known for living a life of personal holiness.
7. Spirit-filled and led by the Holy Spirit.
8. Discerning.
9. Demonstrates grace while being frank and honest.
10. A good listener and respectful in his or her responses.
11. Patient.
12. Content with life and not greedy, in other words a person who values God over things.
13. Demonstrates self-giving love, openness, and vulnerability in relationships.
14. Knows forgiveness and can be forgiving.
15. Experienced in life and in prayer.
16. Fits with your personal needs and personality.

Begin to pray and ask God about who might fulfill this role in your life and when you should enter into such a relationship.

Assessing Commitment to Spiritual Disciplines

During three minutes of silence, consider where you are and where you would like to be in your commitment to the spiritual disciplines described in class. Also review Resource 7-5 and identify at least one other spiritual discipline you would like to try to practice.

When your instructor gives you the signal, fill out the following scale indicators to show where you feel you are in the process of practicing the discipline, and where you would like to be. Indicate where you are with a small line and where you'd like to be with a small circle. Underneath, write one thing you would like to do to move toward your goal.

Reading the Bible as an obligation _____ Interacting with the Bible as a delight

Praying for a desire to pray _____ Utterly dependent on prayer

What's a Sabbath? _____ Regularly enjoying a full Sabbath rest

Principles for Communication

1. **The Art of Listening.** Most people assume that being a good listener is a natural human skill. While many high school and college students take speech classes, most of them never take a listening class. The outcome of focusing on speaking and not listening is obvious when we consider how many counselors are paid to listen to other people's problems! Being a good listener invites people to come to you. Who likes to talk to someone who doesn't really listen? When you truly listen, you communicate that you care enough to get it right. If you will repeat back what you heard, this will allow the speaker to confirm that you DID get it right or clarify if there was a misunderstanding.
2. **The Sense of Sensitivity.** Part of good listening is to understand what the speaker does not use words to communicate. Does the person need a joke? Is it best to probe for more information or simply listen? You will have to be aware of all the signals a person is giving: body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, and the unspoken words in their eyes.

When you take the time to pay attention to all of their communication, you will meet them where they are. This would include the art of timing. There are appropriate times for different conversations, as well as times when certain conversations must be postponed. Work hard to find the right time and right place for your conversations.

3. **Clarity Is King.** You must work at being clear in what you say and what you hear. Misunderstanding can drain a team's energy, waste valuable time, and cause some hurt feelings. It is best to repeat both what you say and hear to check for clarity. Print your ideas or statements so they can be read as well as heard. This will ensure more accuracy of communication.

For more information see the following web site:

http://www.youthspecialties.com/articles/topics/staff_relationships/senior_pastors.php

4. **Strive for Complete Honesty.** Live above reproach, and you will not have to try to dance around issues. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" sets a good guideline. Lay your perspective on the table. Keep in mind that others may see situations differently than you do. If both speak honestly and encourage honesty with an open and hospitable acceptance of differences, you will find your communication is effective and helpful.

Qualities Present in Healthy Children's Ministry Teams

There are five qualities present in healthy children's ministry teams:

- Christlikeness
- Competence
- Character
- Child-focus
- Compatibility

The Bible is quite clear about a special responsibility involved in teaching and ministering to the youngest believers. "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Mt 18:6).

When we create a team to minister to these little ones, we must first think about the kind of persons whom we can trust with them. Children are vulnerable. Scripture tells us we are also endangering the spiritual welfare of the adults we select if they are not ready for the responsibility of working with children. The recruiting of volunteers is not a job to be taken lightly! We are doing more than just filling a place in our programs. We are placing people into positions in which they will spiritually form others and be formed themselves as they serve. Every team member is precious and truly valuable.

The first requirement for service is showing **Christlikeness**. All Christians are on the journey toward this goal. None of us have arrived. Those we recruit to serve children must be good models of Christ and His love. We cannot afford to assume that because a person associates with the church, Christlikeness is a priority. The volunteer's relationship with Christ should be vibrant and growing. Our volunteers should be able to express their Christian commitment in age-appropriate ways.

Second, volunteers should show evidence of **competence**. They should possess or be willing to acquire the basic skills and gifts to perform their tasks well. A competent teacher is teachable. Skills don't have to be fully formed, but teachers should be open to learning how to teach better. Caregivers should be open to learning how to care better. Craft assistants should be open to learning new crafts. Whatever the job, the volunteer must have basic skills and a commitment to improving them for the sake of their ministry in the name of Christ.

Third, you need people with strong **character**. Good traits are loyalty, perseverance, kindness, and self-control. These traits are important for people who will be models for children and team members who will commit to the goals of your ministry. Character counts.

Fourth, the ability to be **child-focused** is essential. You need people who love kids and are willing to sacrifice their personal interests for the children. Volunteers will sometimes miss out on adult experiences. They must be able to be focused enough on children that they receive as much from volunteering as they give. People who work with kids should genuinely appreciate kids, understand kids, and have a heart for kids.

Fifth, there is the element of **compatibility** (in North American English language we would call it “click”). It is hard to describe, but it is easy to sense. When a team clicks, there is the sense of shared value and purposefulness in working together. There is the need for many sets of skills and many different talents to make a team function effectively. It is not wise to look for people who are all alike. Look for people who make the existing team better, more energized, and more effective. Christian service should bring out the best in each of us as we function as one body with one goal: to carry out the mission of Christ.

Getting Organized for Teamwork

Now that you know the kind of people you’re looking for, get ready to make their experience (as well as yours and the children’s) a positive one.

1. Provide a written job description for every team member.

Everyone functions better when the expectations are clear and reasonable. A job description should include:

- Task responsibilities (Don’t forget training obligations and specific expectations for preparation as well as performance.)
- Qualifications
- Relationship definitions (Who will supervise, troubleshoot, and assist in making the individual successful in this job?)

Limit the job description to one page. When you give this page to a new team member, go over it together. Have the volunteer sign off on each section. Make a copy for yourself, and give one to the volunteer to keep.

2. Plan for periodic reviews. Reviews should go two ways. Evaluate how the team member is succeeding in their responsibilities and where they need help. Reviews should include a review of the job description. Allow the volunteer to recommit to it. This will help volunteers not to feel taken advantage of or taken for granted. It will give you the opportunity to affirm the volunteer and address any areas of concern on a regular basis rather than in a crisis mode. It will also allow you to determine if the individual might be called to a new opportunity for service.

Reviews should always be looked upon as a positive celebration and not as a threatening experience. On a team, everyone sinks or swims together. For new team members, the reviews should be frequent (after one month, three months, six months, and one year). After the first year of service, celebrate the volunteer’s anniversary with an annual review lunch.

3. Commit to regular team meetings and frequent communication. Since communication or a lack of communication can either make or break a ministry team, plan regular team meetings and frequent opportunities to communicate. Most volunteer staffs find that quarterly meetings help to keep everyone on the same page. This is a good opportunity to distribute curriculum for the coming quarter, address any important issues that have arisen, provide teacher training, plan for upcoming events, share dreams and ideas, and check to make sure you are on track with the mission and vision of the church.

Depending on the size of your group and the amount of activity in your church, consider printing a monthly calendar, a weekly news update, or an annual scrapbook to help volunteers feel connected.

For more information see the following web site:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/bcl/areas/leadership/articles/122304.html>

Lesson 9: Interaction with Staff and Church Personnel

Due This Lesson

Two-page paper
Letter
Reading Resource 8-7
Reading Resource 8-8
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- have a basic understanding of appropriate interactions with different staff members, especially the senior pastor
 - have a basic understanding of conflict resolution
 - know how to recruit and equip others for ministry and handle situations in which volunteers are not fulfilling their responsibilities

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page paper on the staff relationships you have already experienced. Tell the aspects that were most successful as well as the greatest struggles. If there was conflict, tell how it was dealt with and if it was resolved. If you have not been on a church staff, you can explain other work relationships you have experienced, using the same criteria.

Read Resource 9-6.

Read Resource 9-7.

Read Resource 9-8.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section about what you think your personal strengths and weakness will be in future staff relationships.

Small Groups

In your group discuss and complete the following:

Three Key Elements of Staff Relationships

1. Mutual Trust.

The benefits of a trusting relationship are:

2. Mutual Respect.

In an article entitled "What Every Children's Ministry Leader Needs to Know,"³⁰ Hybels shares his own attitude on Children's Ministry:

I admit I was a late-arriver to see the value children's ministry could bring to Willow Creek. It started when, occasionally, a mother or father would share excitement over how much their kids learned in Promiseland. Parents noticed their kids were changing, and that grabbed my attention. Then I would run into volunteers fired up about working with children. I never really looked at children's ministry as a place where scores or even hundreds of volunteers could find their most meaningful place of service in the church. I always thought most people would find that adult ministry was the place to use their gifts. But a picture was developing of kids' lives changing—and a place where significant numbers of volunteers were using their spiritual gifts.

Then came a real turning point. Promiseland began to align all their horsepower with the overall objectives of the church. Sue Miller (Promiseland's executive director) began to vision cast and challenge non-member volunteers to join the church. Then she transitioned to a small group structure designed to intentionally shepherd all kids and volunteers. And to help our church's efforts to care for the poor, I learned that Promiseland kids, with adult supervision, had begun to serve meals to homeless people at our church—building compassion into their young hearts. When I saw all of the ways that our children's ministry was in stride with the goals and priorities of the entire church, I said, "This is genius." All of a sudden I realized we were playing on the same team, going in the same direction.

In the paragraphs above, underline the things that built respect for children's ministry.

Four things that built respect for Children's Ministries at Willow Creek.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

My lesson from Willow Creek:

Reflect on your own situation and whether there is a connect or disconnect in your own church setting. Do you see places where your ministry is strongly respected? Are there any areas where respect needs to be developed?

3. Mutual Appreciation.

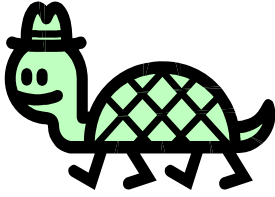
Look for what is right.
Practical application:

Look for ways to encourage.
Practical application:

Look for times to protect.
Practical application:

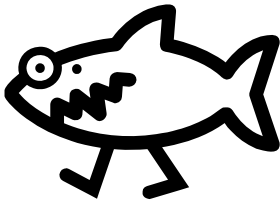
Look for opportunities to communicate.
Practical application:

Styles of Conflict Resolution



Tortoise—avoids/withdraws

The tortoise will try to avoid conflict situations. You may discover the tortoise taking different routes through the church, so he doesn't bump into whoever he is in conflict with. This in turns causes the tortoise to withdraw from situations where he might ordinarily be actively involved, tucking his head into his shell for protection instead!



Shark—competes/forces

The shark is a predator. Sharks will attempt to intimidate, overpower, and out-argue the adversary. They will open wide to bear their sharp teeth. They will pull rank, name drop, and use whatever tools are at their disposal in order to prove their point and get their way. Sharks are out to win at any price.



Teddy Bear—accommodates/smooths

Teddy bears love to be loved. The Teddy Bear will do whatever it takes to have peace. They will bend, give in to the other person, and even take the blame for situations that are not their fault in order to smooth things over and be lovable.



Fox—compromises

The wily fox will attempt to compromise. Foxes are willing to give up certain aspects of their position as long as the other person is also willing to do the same. Foxes will meet you in the middle in order to negotiate a peace that is acceptable to all parties.



Owl—collaborates/problem solves

Owls are known for their wisdom. The owl recognizes there may be a solution that is better than a compromise. The owl will talk with individuals who have expert knowledge surrounding the conflict and attempt to find workable solutions to the problem that are better than first imagined.

Small Groups

Using the three-step plan of approaching conflict, take turns responding to the 5 scenarios.

Three-step plan:

1. When you . . . (Describe the behavior and check your perception.)
2. I feel . . . (Describe your own feelings or summarize the problem. Do not ascribe blame to the other person. Just state your personal reaction.)
3. I would prefer . . . (Explain an alternative approach that would help you to deal with the situation without becoming defensive.)

Five scenarios:

1. A staff member talks about you behind your back.
2. On a church outing, a parent leaves the children alone in the church van while he and the other chaperone run into a gas station to go to the bathroom.
3. The senior pastor changes the schedule of children's activities without letting you know. You find out through a parent.
4. A volunteer gives a child an aspirin without clearing it with you or the child's parents.
5. A volunteer shames a little girl who wet her pants during Sunday School.

Rules for Recruitment

1. Don't advertise a job. Share a Vision.
2. Let people know this is not an indefinite commitment.
3. Be selective
4. Be Spirit-sensitive
5. Keep a process alive
6. Pray continually

Redirecting a Team Member

When situations arise where action needs to be taken—volunteer or paid staff—you need to comply with both Christian ethical principles and legal obligations which include:

1. Document areas you are working on, particularly with paid staff. Your reviews should include a written record. In addition, you should make a note of any problems that arise between reviews. This will help the person understand they are not being discriminated against, but there is a written track record of expectations and attempts to correct the failures.
2. Your approach should be caring and sensitive, even if the person was unkind to you or to a child. Be kind, and attempt to help the person discover a more suitable area of service in consultation with other staff members. Note your appreciation of their strengths and affirm their value to another setting.
3. If you are terminating employment due to a lack of funds, offer your networking assistance to help the people find a new job. If possible, negotiate a way to extend any benefits until they can find new employment. Let them know you will provide recommendations or anything else that will help them during this time of transition.

What Does It Mean to Be a Pastor?

The pastor is an individual called by the church to a specific leadership role in the faith community. In the Church of the Nazarene, this role is carefully spelled out in our *Manual*, and individual churches select pastors based on the needs of their particular communities.

It may be helpful to separate the pastoral office from pastoral tasks. The pastoral office is the role itself, and it is usually a vocational path. Whenever an individual feels called to the pastoral office, that individual begins a process of education, preparation, and confirmation of his or her call through the church. God calls the pastor, and the church confirms the pastor's gifts and skills in a process known as ordination. In the Church of the Nazarene, the process of ordination is administered through our districts in cooperation with our educational providers—like the class you are participating in today.

The pastoral office is a unique position of leadership that carries out specific legal, ethical, and sacramental responsibilities. Only the licensed minister or ordained elder is able to administer the sacraments of the church—the Lord's Supper and baptism—sign our marriage licenses, and qualify for housing allowances and other tax benefits in the United States. (Other countries may have different legal roles and benefits for the pastor.) This is the OFFICE of pastor.

The TASKS of pastoral ministry or pastoral care are much less specifically defined or regulated. Pastoral care looks toward the holistic care of the individual—body, mind, and soul. Pastoral tasks are broad and vary, depending on the needs of the people at the time. Biblically, pastoral care may be most closely related to the tasks of shepherding. The pastor becomes the "lead shepherd" of a particular congregation or part of a congregation, as in the case of the children's pastor, youth pastor, or pastor of evangelism and outreach. We follow the model of our "Chief Shepherd," Jesus Christ, and become the visible representation of Christ to His people.

Some of us will serve as children's pastors in an official, licensed, or ordained position. Others will pastor children as lay people. Laymen will not be ordained and will not offer the sacraments to children or adults in their care. All will offer pastoral care to children. We must become skilled at ministering to the unique needs of the children we shepherd.

Let's look at some of the characteristics and roles of the shepherd to better understand pastoral care. Being a shepherd is not the same as owning a flock. God owns the flock, and He entrusts the flock to the shepherd's care.

1. The shepherd must know who his or her sheep are.

For many shepherds throughout history, this has involved naming the flock. One of the most simple and yet powerful things a children's pastor can do to demonstrate a child's worth is to acknowledge the children and call each one by name.

John 10:3 says the Good Shepherd "calls his own sheep by name . . ." In the Hebrew tradition, a name is not an accident. "A name contains the essence and nature of the thing named." [<http://www.jewfaq.org/name.htm>]. It is a simple,

basic courtesy to know the names of the children to whom we minister. It is the task of a shepherd to know the essence and nature of the child. This leads us to two particular responsibilities:

- Know about children in general, their developmental characteristics and such.
- Know about the unique children we serve and their personalities, preferences, and life circumstances.

John 10:14 says, "I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me."

There are many ways to get to know the flock. Let's start with the most obvious ones.

- Observe children carefully. Even when you know the basics of ages and stages, you've only begun to understand what your particular children are like. Watch them! Watch how they interact with each other, how they tackle learning situations, how they respond to frustration, and what makes them giggle.
- Listen to children carefully. Ask them about their opinions, their favorite things, their family, and their week. Listening is something that works two ways. If you ever want children to listen to what matters to you, you must listen to what matters to them.
- Pay attention to the people who love them. You need to create relationships with the people who nurture your flock on a daily basis. Watch how they show love to each other. Watch the situations where love is not evident. Watch how adults handle conflict. Learn what is important to their families. Know when families are facing challenges. Children are individuals, but they are also part of groups of friends and family who influence them. By understanding the groups, you understand the child better.

Look for specific tips, like asking the senior pastor about prayer requests you may have missed by not being in the service. These may include:

- Personal visits (The parents are aware of the visit.)
- Phone calls to see how children are feeling
- One-on-one conversations
- Letters personally addressed to or exchanged with children
- Asking for prayer requests and praying with children

The Reverend Bill Wilson has a children's church in a warehouse in the Bronx of New York. Twenty thousand children attend, and each child gets a personal visit from an adult every week.

For this kind of ongoing contact, it would be helpful to keep a chart with each child's name on it. Mark off the dates when teachers and volunteers make personal phone calls, visits, or send personal letters. This insures ongoing contact with each of the children throughout the year. [For more information on Bill Wilson and one of the largest Sunday School ministries in the world see:

<http://metroministries.com>]

2. The shepherd provides for the sheep.

Our most basic role is providing for their immediate needs. We join parents in the messy, day-to-day tasks of wiping noses, changing diapers, and relating to kids one-on-one in whatever need presents itself in the moment. But more specifically,

we as children's pastors provide intentionally through our programming. We provide Christian education, age-appropriate worship, opportunities for building faith-based relationships, discipleship and service training, a connection to the greater Body of Christ, and building blocks for life-long faith, including a strong regard for the Bible. In some cases, providing goes beyond the Christian educational programming of the church and includes provision of services, such as tutoring, daycare, sports teams, or other services needed in the community.

Whatever our specific programs, we must provide an overall environment that demonstrates the nature and character of God. This means that our climate must be loving, long-suffering, grace-filled, secure, fair, and pleasant—even fun! We provide appropriate boundaries and discipline. We provide an example of how people should treat each other. These are the "green pastures" and "quiet waters" that Psalm 23 indicates the shepherd finds for his flock. In a world that models strife and disrespect for human life, the church must offer a healthy and safe oasis for feeding the flock of lambs and being an example to their parents.

3. The shepherd protects the sheep.

Danger is an inescapable part of life. There are many ways to protect children, from taking appropriate precautions about who is serving them, to regular safety-checks of the church premises. But there are also other ways in which children need protection. We need to protect their interests in the congregation—standing up for their right to be supported through the budget, to participate in the mission of the church, and to contribute to congregational health through their active involvement.

It is a pastoral/shepherding role to protect children in social ways—to defend the best interest of children who are being abused, neglected, or abandoned emotionally, physically, and politically. In our role as protectors, we are constantly asking the question, "What will this mean for the children?"

It is also a pastoral/shepherding role to protect individuals in our own flock from harm. When a child in our congregation needs food, or shoes, or medical treatment, we should look to provide protection from want. When parents are unable or unwilling to care adequately for their children, the church steps in to support the family and protect the children. When a child is fatherless or motherless, we can help to provide healthy role-models. We must be very careful to protect the dignity of every member of the family, but we must never compromise the safety of the child. **We must not forget that it is our legal obligation in the United States to report abuse to civil authorities**, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can focus on preventing abuse by offering adequate support for families before abusive events occur.

We also protect individual children from the effects of crisis in their lives. We'll talk more specifically about particular crises later in Lesson 10.

4. The Shepherd Plans Ahead.

It is a pastoral role to prepare for the future. Many times that means making sure there is curriculum, snacks, and supplies, and everything is ready for the children to arrive. But there is something else for the children's pastor to be aware of. This information is not biblical, but it comes from the College of Veterinarian Medicine at Virginia Tech. According to their specialists,

“Successful development, breeding, and lambing of ewe lambs is one of most important tasks of the shepherd. Compared to mature ewes, ewe lambs require more management. Specifically, proper management of replacement ewe lambs from birth through first lambing is critical to overall flock productivity and profitability.”³¹

Let’s take this observation apart. “Compared to mature ewes, ewe lambs require more management.” For our young, this may go without saying. Our little sheep of the church require more management than our adults. We must think carefully and strategically about the work that goes on among our children. We cannot leave caring for our youngest members to chance.

We could look at “replacement” as bringing in new children to our flock. Some of that is done through the births that happen within our congregation. But we, as children’s pastors, must also be constantly aware of the need to evangelize, to bring children into the healthy environment of our flock. In the business terms of our veterinary friends, “overall flock productivity and profitability” depend on attention to this mission. For us, as God’s people, the long term mission of our churches requires attention to care, nurture, and development of our young. Good shepherding today leads to a healthy flock tomorrow. We are investing in both the present and the future when we pastor our children.

5. The Shepherd has a personal presence.

Perhaps the most important aspect of shepherding is being with the sheep. A shepherd cannot protect, plan ahead, provide, or know the sheep without being present. The shepherd’s role is unique because he or she has more perspective than the sheep being led. That perspective, for the Christian shepherd, is developed through ongoing relationship with the Chief Shepherd who leads and trains the shepherd in His own ways. Nothing can substitute for time in the Chief Shepherd’s presence, getting direction and being nurtured, learning the terrain, and becoming adequately prepared for the task ahead. To be with the sheep, to gain their trust and affection, and bring them back from harm’s way requires solid personal commitment to growth and being a worthy example of what it means to belong to Christ. You must be both in the presence of Christ and in the presence of His sheep.

The ABCs of Nurturing³²

A Accept all your learners as God made them.

Each is a unique part of their classroom, church, and the Kingdom.

B Believe in your students.

Many children have no one that simply believes in them. Church could be the only place where kids find adults who think they are winners.

C Celebrate birthdays and other special events.

There are many ways to do this. The very fact that you know and acknowledge children's landmarks is a celebration in itself.

D Develop relationships.

Step outside the classroom door if a student needs some special relationship building time. You may want to prayerfully consider a home visit or taking a children out for ice-cream. Search Institute research tells us that children need support from three or more non-parent adults to grow up healthy, competent, and caring.

E Encourage effort.

Look for more than the final outcome of children's attempts. Encourage them in the process of trying.

F Find something to praise each child for each Sunday.

I said this at a teacher's convention and someone said, "I have a student about whom the only positive thing I can say is, 'I sure am glad you don't go home with me.'" We laugh at this, but we have all experienced the same feeling at some time with a child. Pray about it and don't let yourself off the hook.

G Give tokens of affection kids don't have to earn.

Kids love little touchable or taste-able reminders of your affection. When my children were very little, a dear man stood at the door to the sanctuary and gave each child a hard candy from his pocket. He didn't withhold from a child who wiggled or didn't sing. He just let each one know he was glad they were there. My kids still remember that Mr. Jim liked them and made them feel happy to be in church.

H Hone children's talents.

Be an encourager of the natural gifts your children exhibit. Give them opportunities to use their voices, instruments, artistic skills, athletic abilities, creative writing—whatever you observe. Champion children's ability to develop and make contributions to your church through using their individual gifts.

I Initiate conversations.

Call a student on the phone, stop him or her in the hallway, or most importantly, ask for his or her input when you are talking to another adult in the student's presence. (Be sure to talk to the parents before you ask to speak with the child on the phone.)

J Just say no.

Provide firm and consistent limits to help children feel secure.

K Kindly present the truth.

Children need our honest feedback. Let children know when they are meeting your expectations in a firm but kind manner.

L Listen and laugh.

Take the time to really attend to what a child has to say. Handle difficult situations with humor, and be careful to always laugh *with* the child, never *at* him or her.

- M Make your class a safe place.**
Banish put-downs and sarcasm. Never let a child be the victim of anyone else.
- N Never underestimate your students' potential.**
God has often used children to accomplish his purpose.
- O Offer yourself as a champion**
Commit to being the person who always hopes, always perseveres, always looks to the best interests of each of your students.
- P Point to God's plans.**
Affirm that God has a plan for the life of each of your students. They need to know that the God of the universe holds their life as precious and their future as valuable.
- Q Question children in ways that make them think.**
Even little ones don't always need the easy answers. They will learn much more if you help them develop their own conclusions through effective questioning.
- R Respect children's boundaries.**
Don't make every issue a challenge to your authority. If a child is truly too tired, hungry, scared, or shy to do what you have asked offer a respectful alternative that will work for both of you.
- S Stay on top of what is going on in a child's life.**
We live in a busy society and home visits may not be common, they can be one of the most powerful ways of enhancing ministry. We can quickly get a window into a child's life when we visit him or her in their own home.
- T Treasure the child.**
Take every opportunity to tell the child how precious he or she is to God and to you. There are many thousand ways to say how much you love a child. A love song I learned long ago says it best, "I'm lucky to have you as part of my life."
- U Understand before assessing.**
Try to understand what is motivating a child before judging harshly. No child's behavior occurs in a vacuum.
- V Value children in the same way Jesus did.**
Remember that the kingdom of heaven belongs not to the rich and famous but to children.
- W Wait.**
Many of our frustrations could be eliminated if we just waited. Wait for him or her to process your request; wait until that one last cottonball is on the paper; wait until he or she thinks of an answer; wait and allow them to get old enough to accomplish the task.
- X Exchange one of your plans for one of theirs!**
Flexibility can save the day.
- Y Yell only in encouragement.**
Save the shouting for basketball games or swim meets. Speak with a respectfully modulated voice during class.
- Z Zip your lips to criticism.**
Address problems as they arise. Never fall into the trap of criticizing a child in or out of his or her presence.

"... Follow me, and feed my sheep."

Guidelines for Being a Compassionate Presence

1. If the doctor enters the room (or anyone else that might bring information), position yourself behind the mother or child (if no one else is there). Place your hand under their elbow. You are there to offer comfort and support and be prepared in case the person collapses or faints. If that happens, bend your knees slightly to support the person's weight and cushion the fall. In this case, you are actually offering physical protection as well as emotional support. Have tissues available in case they are needed. You may want to practice this skill in partner groups.
2. Be aware of family members' need to keep physically strong. If it has been a while since they have had food or fluids, remind them to eat or drink. Offer a choice of two healthy options, and provide the food for them. Don't complicate the situation with too many decisions. Many will not feel like eating anything, but offering some fluids occasionally may be helpful. Offer to "stand watch," while they get some rest.
3. If there are arrangements that need to be made, offer to take over the responsibility of working out the details. For example, if children need to be taken home or taken to school the next morning or fed, find appropriate people to fill these needs to free parents' minds of the details. If a death has occurred, be ready with suggestions for funeral arrangements, but offer them only if needed.
4. On occasion, you may have to intervene if someone is not being sensitive. You may have to insure privacy if that is the family's wish. You can offer to take messages, greet and share the information a family asks you to share, field phone calls or otherwise handle the needs of those who are not part of the immediate family circle. If the family wants to have company, you may find that people are not always prepared to comfort those who grieve. One pastor tells the story of ministering to the family of a 15-year-old who had been killed in a car accident.

"One man began telling the father he should be glad God took his daughter, because there may have been some awful things in her future." The pastor approached the man and said, "Could I speak to you for a moment?" He then directed the man to a specific task that needed to be done away from the family. This graciously let the individual know that his being there was appreciated, but the spiritual needs of the family were being addressed by the pastoral team. In this case, the pastor sent the man for food, then met him at the door to let him know that he would make sure the family got the food.
5. Your role is to be ready for whatever needs become apparent, but you should not insert yourself into the situation where you are not needed. This takes discernment. If you do nothing but sit quietly and pray for the family and for direction about how you can help, it can be very helpful and supportive for the family. In counseling, this is called being a "non-anxious presence"—someone who can keep a cool head and be calm in the midst of a very stormy situation.

Lesson 10: Pastoral Care

Due This Lesson

Two-page paper
Reading Resource 9-6
Reading Resource 9-7
Reading Resource 9-8
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- Understand what it means to “pastor” children.
 - Be able to help children engage in the sacraments.
 - Know some guidelines for helping children and families deal with crisis and grief.

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page paper about your role as a children’s pastor. What does the word “pastor” mean to you? What images does this elicit? How do your personal characteristics fit with your image of a pastor or shepherd? Where do you see your greatest strengths in shepherding? Where do you see your need for improvement?

Read Resource 10-6.

Read Resource 10-7.

Read Resource 10-8.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section about your baptism and first communion experience.

Resource

www.wordaction.com/go/BAPTISM
www.wordaction.com/go/COMMUNION

Rituals for Infant Baptism or Dedication

From the *Manual*, Church of the Nazarene 2005-2009

800.2. The Baptism of Infants or Young Children

When the sponsors shall have presented themselves with the child (or children) the minister shall say:

DEARLY BELOVED: While we do not hold that baptism imparts the regenerating grace of God, we do believe that Christ gave this holy sacrament as a sign and seal of the new covenant.

Christian baptism signifies for this young child God's gracious acceptance on the basis of His prevenient grace in Christ, and points forward to his (her) personal appropriation of the benefits of the Atonement when he (she) reaches the age of moral accountability and exercises conscious saving faith in Jesus Christ.

In presenting this child for baptism you are hereby witnessing to your own personal Christian faith and to your purpose to guide him (her) early in life to a knowledge of Christ as Savior. To this end it is your duty to teach him (her), as soon as he (she) shall be able to learn, the nature and end of this holy sacrament; to watch over his (her) education, that he (she) may not be led astray; to direct his (her) feet to the sanctuary; to restrain him (her) from evil associates and habits; and as much as in you lies, to bring him (her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Will you endeavor to do so by the help of God?

If so, answer, "I will."

The minister may then ask the parents or guardians to name the child, and shall then baptize the child, repeating his (her) full name and saying:

_____, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister may then offer the following prayer or may use an extemporary prayer.

Heavenly Father, we humbly pray that Thou wilt take this child into Thy loving care. Abundantly enrich him (her) with Thy heavenly grace; bring him (her) safely through the perils of childhood; deliver him (her) from the temptations of youth; lead him (her) to a personal knowledge of Christ as Savior; help him (her) to grow in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and

man, and to persevere therein to the end. Uphold the parents with loving care, that with wise counsel and holy example they may faithfully discharge their responsibilities to both this child and to Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

800.3. The Dedication of Infants or Young Children

When the parents or guardians have presented themselves with the child (or children) the minister shall say:

"Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Matthew 19:13-14).

In presenting this child for dedication you signify not only your faith in the Christian religion but also your desire that he (she) may early know and follow the will of God, may live and die a Christian, and come unto everlasting blessedness. In order to attain this holy end, it will be your duty, as parents (guardians), to teach him (her) early the fear of the Lord, to watch over his (her) education, that he (she) be not led astray; to direct his (her) youthful mind to the Holy Scriptures, and his (her) feet to the sanctuary; to restrain him (her) from evil associates and habits; and, as much as in you lies, to bring him (her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Will you endeavor to do so by the help of God?

If so, answer, "I will."

Pastor: I now ask you, the congregation; will you commit yourself as the Body of Christ to support and encourage these parents as they endeavor to fulfill their responsibilities to this child and to assist _____ by nurturing his (her) growth toward spiritual maturity?

Response: We will.

Pastor: Our loving Heavenly Father, we do here and now dedicate _____ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then the minister may offer the following prayer, or may use an extemporary prayer.

Heavenly Father, we humbly pray that Thou wilt take this child into Thy loving care. Abundantly enrich him (her) with Thy heavenly grace;

bring him (her) safely through the perils of childhood; deliver him (her) from the temptations of youth; lead him (her) to a personal knowledge of Christ as Savior; help him (her) to grow in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and man, and to persevere therein to the end. Uphold the parents with loving care, that with wise counsel and holy example they may faithfully discharge their responsibilities both to this child and to Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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800.4. The Dedication of Infants or Young Children (Ritual for Single Parent or Guardian)

When the parent or guardian has presented himself (herself) with the child (or children) the minister shall say: "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Matthew 19:13-14).

In presenting this child for dedication you signify not only your faith in the Christian religion but also your desire that he (she) may early know and follow the will of God, may live and die a Christian, and come unto everlasting blessedness. In order to attain this holy end, it will be your duty, as a parent (guardian), to teach him (her) early the fear of the Lord, to watch over his (her) education, that he (she) be not led astray; to direct his (her) youthful mind to the Holy Scriptures, and his (her) feet to the sanctuary; to restrain him (her) from evil associates and habits; and, as much as in you lies, to bring him (her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Guidelines for Child Baptism

1. Can the child express in his or her own words
 - There is a God.
 - God wants to be friends with us.
 - My sin keeps me from being God's friend.
 - Jesus forgave my sins.
 - Jesus teaches me how to be God's friend.
 - I want to live for God by letting Jesus be my leader.
 - I want other people to know that Jesus took my sin away.
 - My baptism will show others I am going to live as a Christian.

2. Do the adults in a child's life recognize
 - the child's testimony of a relationship with God through Christ?
 - sensitivity to the Holy Spirit?
 - growing maturity to make decisions for him or herself?
 - the decision is being made with encouragement but without a sense of being pushed or bribed into it?

Commemorating Special Events in Children's Lives

Use one or more of these tokens to give children and families a lasting reminder of the special events in their lives.

For Baby Dedications and Baptisms

- A journal to record their prayers and answers for this child's life.
- A Baby Bible, inscribed with the child's name, the date, and signature of the pastor who conducted the ceremony
- A recording of the special music used in the service
- A framed family photo
- A letter of encouragement for the parents to open when the child makes a commitment to Jesus (at whatever age that comes)
- A worship folder with a picture of the baby on the cover. Encourage family and friends to save this as a reminder of their part in the commitment to nurture the child in the love of the Lord.

For Believer Baptisms

- A towel (embroidered with the name and date if possible)
- A developmentally-appropriate Bible or devotional book
- A personal journal
- A book of blessings and prayers from parents, pastor, and members of the congregation
- A symbol of new life, such as a butterfly, that is given to every baptismal candidate
- A letter for the child to open on a particular birthday, reminding him or her of the significance of the event.

Specific Needs of Children

1. Match the amount of information with the need to know.

Never lie to a child.

Do not use symbolic language.

2. Be theologically accurate.

Children's perceptions of God are especially vulnerable in times of crisis.

Children have all kinds of misinformation about what happens to people when they die.

People do not become angels or ghosts.

Listen to the "stories" of experiences that children say they have had with a person who has died.

3. Offer ongoing support and regular follow-up.

Talk about common emotions associated with grief.

Don't force a child to have a conversation the child does not want to have.

Show on-going concern—it goes beyond a few weeks.

4. Help other children to show care.

Other children will have questions.

Show children how to care for each other.

Helping Children Grieve

DO create an atmosphere of normalcy for the child through ongoing ministry activity.	DON'T avoid mentioning the loss or memories of the person who has died or stop praying for the family publicly.
DO acknowledge your own feelings of loss.	DON'T avoid being present to the family.
DO remind parents that children process grief differently than adults do.	DON'T be surprised by behavior that seems overly cheerful or seems to deny the loss. Children need breaks in their grief.
DO provide many different ways of expressing what the child is experiencing: art opportunities, play, open-ended conversation.	DON'T expect the child to respond to every opening you offer. Sometimes they just don't want to share, while other times they will need to.
DO offer a safe place to express feelings.	DON'T shame a child for not expressing grief in a way that you expect.
DO give attention to all the individuals affected by the loss.	DON'T focus on the child to the extent that they feel completely different from their peer group.
DO encourage the child to remember that God knows what is happening and loves the child in the midst of his or her crisis.	DON'T try to explain God's purposes.
DO listen to how the child feels.	DON'T try to move children away from their feelings because they make you uncomfortable.
DO be prepared for emotional outbursts.	DON'T tell the child not to cry or to be good when they are struggling with feelings.
DO offer to do specific things for the child and family, such as child care, shopping, play dates, picking a child up for church events.	DON'T say "Call me if you need me," because many times families don't know what they need and don't want to be overly dependent.
DO expect ups and downs to last for "a while."	DON'T try to tell a child when it's time to "get over it."
DO anticipate how specific church events may affect the child and family after their loss.	DON'T avoid planning regular events. Instead acknowledge how the event might affect the family and help the child to think about how to handle the situation.

Planning with Purpose

Most of us do not come into a church without programs. Even in the smallest of churches, the congregation has expectations for what should be offered to children. Usually these include one or more of the following:

- Sunday School
- Children's Worship
- Caravans
- Children's Quizzing
- Vacation Bible School
- Summer camp
- Nursery
- Discipleship Classes
- Childcare for adult events

There is nothing particularly sacred about any of these programs, except as they are important to the local congregation, the district, and the general church. None of them are mandated by Scripture. What is mandated by Scripture is summarized in several passages including the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19-20, NLT: "Therefore, **go** and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Teach** these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

And Deuteronomy 6:4-9: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must **love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength**. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. **Repeat them** again and again to your children. **Talk about them** when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder and wear them on your forehead. **Write them** on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

This partnership between the Church (represented in the Matthew passage), and the home (represented by the Deuteronomy passage), is sacred, as are the specific tasks we have highlighted from those verses. So we start our search for purpose with the biblical basis shared by all Christian congregations. How we move on from there is up to us, in cooperation with our church mission and structure. *We should first be clear about our purpose and mission, and then we decide how the programs become tools for those tasks.*

Walking through a series of questions will help us develop a vision statement for our overall program. Then asking variations of the questions will help us develop individual mission statements for each specific program. We will work through this in class.

When you have developed your overall vision, post the statement where it is visible to everyone. Include it in planning documents, newsletters, and staff meeting agendas. This will increase the probability that the original purpose for your gatherings will not get lost in the busyness and unique personalities of those involved.

Before thinking about specific programs, let's define some of the basic skills and opportunities children need in order to live out the vision statements. Some of the things that should be important are:

- Bible knowledge
- Discipleship and training in spiritual disciplines
- Catechism (doctrinal positions)
- Relationships with peers
- Relationships with supportive adults
- Time with God
- Outreach/evangelism
- Gift development
- Service opportunities
- Character development
- Age-appropriate FUN!

This is a fluid list that will be influenced by each unique congregation. However, some things are foundational to the Christian faith, and we must not leave these out. Our list becomes the basis for what we try to bring into our programming. You'll notice that most of these categories are very broad and some of them overlap.

When we think of a specific program, we must determine the primary purpose of the program. This will be backed up with several other purposes that take a supportive role. For example,

- When we consider Sunday School, what should the primary purpose be? Are there other purposes?
- When we consider Quizzing, what should the primary purpose be? Are there other purposes?
- When we consider Children's Worship, what should the primary purpose be? Are there other purposes?

Keeping the focus clear helps us to offer a balanced overall program of ministry to our children and keeps us directed toward our specific targets for particular programs.

Sunday School Ministry

Let's start with a brief look at the history of Sunday School. The original purpose of Sunday school was very different than Sunday School today. During the Industrial Revolution, Robert Raikes, a popular newspaper owner, became troubled by the number of children who were working in factories without hope of education. He feared these children would become adults who lacked the skills to be productive members of society. With no one guiding their minds, and little time for character development, these rowdy little children roamed the streets in mischief on Sundays, rather than going to church.

Raikes had an idea. What if he could organize schools for them on Sundays? They could learn to read from the Bible, and God's Word would make a difference in their lives! Thus he could both educate and train these children in moral character. That would be the purpose of "Sunday School."

Meanwhile in the United States, Wesleyan missionary Francis Asbury started a Sunday school for slaves in the home of Thomas Crenshaw in Hanover County. It was illegal to teach slaves to read, but a person could teach them the Bible. By the mid 1820s, Sunday school served two purposes: missions for the underprivileged and poor in America (as well as a tool internationally), and religious instruction for the faithful.

As public schools became more accessible to children for learning reading, math and other academic skills, Sunday schools began to take on the characteristics of catechism schools and Wesleyan bands in the Methodist tradition and elsewhere. These became the religious forming centers for children.

Both Sunday school and public school, that had once been considered the task of the family, was institutionalized. Parents began to think the job of teaching children was for specialists and something that could be passed off to experts and their programs.

Our task in Christian Education today is to reestablish a healthy balance of effective programming and effective partnership with parents in their primary responsibility for the spiritual formation of their children. Sunday School should provide an age-appropriate presentation of Bible stories, concepts, and life-application that ties into the overall work of the church to support the whole family's participation in the Body of Christ.

The following is a general list of possible Sunday School classes that you may be responsible to oversee. It is followed by the name of the Word Action Curriculum associated with that age level.

Birth - 11 months	Toddlers/Twos and Babies, Too!
1 - 2 years	Toddlers/Twos and Babies, Too!
3 - 6 years (not in first grade)	Preschool/Kindergarten
1st and 2nd grade	Early Elementary
3rd and 4th grade	Middle Elementary
5th and 6th grade	Preteen

General Environmental Principles for Sunday School

Each age level needs a child-friendly classroom or meeting space. Equipment should match the size of the child whenever possible. The colors and décor should be bright and welcoming and create a perception that this environment was designed with these children in mind.

Consider decorating with pictures of the children who will attend. Bulletin boards should be placed in the rooms at the children's eye level. Hang art, photographs, and displays at the child's eye level. Let the children have the opportunity to use the boards themselves. Keep the bulletin boards current, so students and parents will know the materials are planned and purposeful, not just a room decoration. Having the chalk boards, whiteboards, or newsprint at a child's eye level is a great way to allow the children to be active and involved.

Shelving, cabinets or rolling caddies are helpful to hold supplies such as books, crafts, drawing materials, and games. The whole environment should be inspected for child safety.

The Nursery (Birth to Walking)

Safety, comfort, and consistency are all very important. Parents are putting their very best into your hands for care. Assure parents that every reasonable precaution has been taken to keep their child safe and provide loving comfort.

Check the different components of the room for broken toys, loose hinges, and sharp corners. Check the safety of cribs, seats, walkers, changing tables, and toys. Toys should be routinely cleaned with a solution of 1:10 bleach and water. Surfaces should be wiped with a disinfectant solution before children arrive as well as in between uses by individual children.

Each child should have a cubby or hook labeled with his or her name in order to keep diaper bags, blankets, and sippy-cups connected with the right child.

Another safety feature is a sickness policy for the nursery. This should be written and a copy in the hands of every parent. Have a rule that if a child has a fever or has been sick during the last twenty-four hours he or she should stay with the parents. Most parents will understand that one sick child should not infect and cause the other children to be sick.

Comfortable rocking chairs are recommended for workers who will spend lots of time holding and feeding the babies. Platform rockers help to prevent crawling babies' fingers from accidentally getting injured.

In the nursery, babies are developing attachments. Routines and consistent workers can help with the comfort level. If you don't have consistent nursery caregivers, print and display the nursery routines so all workers can follow the same procedures to help children feel secure.

Welcome babies with the same routine each time. (Do you want workers always to call the baby by name? Do you want the teacher to bend down and look a walker in the eye?) Specify the actions that are important to the atmosphere you want to create in your nursery.

Have the same snack and bottle routines. Follow the same procedures for changing time, perhaps using the same rhymes or finger plays and having special changing time toys. Follow the same procedures for pick-up or dismissal time.

Toddlers

Small tables and chairs are appropriate for snacks, puzzles and crafts. Pretend play is a big part of this and the next age group. Play kitchens, toy vacuum cleaners, castles, and workbenches are all fun and appropriate.

Toddlers are still egocentric and have not matured to a level where they can share their toys. In order to head off confrontations and crying, have plenty of toys available for all the children. Have at least 2 of each toy—children play in parallel at this age and want the same toy at the same time as another child. It is better to have fewer kinds of toys and more of the same toy.

Interactions between the teachers and children are important at this stage. Biblical concepts of love, kindness, sharing, taking turns, and respect can be incorporated into any activity. Brief stories and finger plays can be introduced, but don't expect toddlers to sit down all together. Instead, tell the story multiple times during the morning to individual children.

Preschoolers

Learning centers and play areas are appropriate for this age group. A learning center is a designated area where children can do a particular activity independently or with an assistant. Learning centers can be specific to the lesson, or they can be a skill-based area that is always set up in your classroom.

Lessons need to be active and simple in order to be effective. The average preschool attention span is the number of the child's age. The average attention span of an active three year old is three minutes. That doesn't mean that you need to change activities this often, but you may have to regain the attention of a three year old about once every three minutes.

This is a fun group because they love to ask questions, many of which are not directly related to the topic. Take the lesson and their questions seriously. Be prepared to be interrupted with their numerous inquires. Help them draw connections between their questions and the lesson you are teaching.

Play is a child's natural language. The most effective preschool teachers make connections from the Bible lesson to the child's play. For example, the story of Esther can be part of the dress-up center with a crown and a scepter. Jacob serves Esau stew in the housekeeping center. The story of Exodus begins with a lively game of leaping frogs or hopping bugs.

While rote learning engages the memory, active play develops four areas at once: Social, Language, Motor Skill, and Symbolic Thinking (creating mental images to stand for things). God's Word engages both our logic and our imaginations. Preschoolers will benefit from acting out the stories of the Bible.

Crafts should be carefully matched to the skill level of preschoolers, who may not have developed the fine-motor skill or patience to cut, write, control glue, or handle tiny

pieces. Think in terms of experiencing processes of art rather than creating masterpieces.

Early Elementary

Chairs and tables that are appropriately-sized are necessary for different activities. However, the room should be arranged to leave large open areas for activities such as circle games and dramas. Activity centers with Bible activities and books should be available along with other project areas.

Provide picture instructions for more complex projects displayed at learning centers, so the children can complete a project independently after you have explained it. Early elementary children are at many different reading levels, so activities should not be dependent totally on reading or writing.

The world of early elementary children is expanding beyond the home, so provide activities to help them apply Bible lessons to friends as well as family.

Middle Elementary

Middle elementary children are gaining confidence in themselves and their abilities to do things that make a difference. They are still growing, and sitting still for too long can actually hurt them physically. So, physically active lessons are appropriate.

Incorporating music, games, drama, and a variety of methods will help these learners stay enthusiastic. Keep the activities connected to the lesson goals.

Middle elementary children know a lot of half-truths. They are exposed to a lot of adult content, but they don't know what to do with it. As a result, they are often fearful and confused. On some days, they are ready to be "big kids." At other times, they retreat to the safety of being little. They may use words or humor inappropriately. They think they understand a word, but they use it out of context or without understanding the full implications. Make sure the children really know what you are saying. Don't overreact to what they say.

Try to prevent children from being picked on by peers or embarrassed. Because they have a strong sense of justice, treat each child fairly. Be careful with competitive games at this stage. No one feels good as a loser, and the child who consistently lags behind peers at this age is likely to disengage.

Though many children are sensitive to the Holy Spirit before this stage, middle elementary children can make a connection between their sin and their need for a Savior. Provide opportunities for these children to express themselves in prayer and develop a sense of their own ability to communicate with God openly.

Preteens

Preteens may feel embarrassed to do the children's activities they once enjoyed, but they may not be ready for teen activities. It definitely is an age of transition.

Preteens have enough energy to get themselves into trouble when they are bored. However, they are able to engage in applying the Bible to areas of their life. Topical studies in areas of their interest are often very effective.

When possible, give preteens the opportunity to establish their own age-specific activities outside of class. This applies particularly to activities that make use of their developing gifts for service. Let them plan events and activities. They can begin to develop leadership skills by working with younger children, and they can serve senior citizens effectively.

Peers are becoming more and more important to preteens, but they are very dependent on their families. Provide plenty of activities in which preteens can invite their friends. Plan activities that require cooperation and communication with others.

Physically, preteens are on the edge of radical changes. Girls are maturing faster than boys. This is often true for preteens' emotional and cognitive growth as well. This causes a lot of self-consciousness for both girls and boys. Sometimes preteens can benefit from gender-separated classes or small groups within a preteen department.

Preteens who accepted Christ at an earlier age are ready to begin to engage in more serious discipleship. They may be ready to respond to the Holy Spirit's call to sanctification and a life defined by Christlike love.

In some churches, sixth graders are moved to the youth department, usually when the public schools follow that schedule. A preteen department, separate from both the youth and the children, offers a good transitional opportunity for preteens to find their place in the body of Christ without the pressure of trying to keep up with teenagers or being bored by programming geared for younger children. Preteens benefit from the opportunity to see their peers' parents working together with their own parents, sharing similar values and guidelines for family life in the context of the church.

Camping Ministry

While camp may not be a ministry for which you are directly responsible, you may need to be a participant through counseling, helping to plan, or definitely recruiting your children to go to camp. Like all activities, you start with a philosophy and goals, and finish with strong programming and management.

It is important to recognize why camp is so effective in changing hearts and lives. There are several things to keep in mind.

1. More time is spent together in one week of camping experience than children spend in Sunday School in an entire year. (Do the math sometime!)
2. Kids get to see real Christians in action 24/7. They discover how Christians respond under pressure. They find out how Christians have fun. They see people at their best and at their worst (covered in whipped cream pies or other silly activities the coordinator has planned).
3. Camp presents the gospel to children on multiple levels through multiple styles in: chapel, Bible studies, play, nature, relationships, time for self-reflection, problem solving, and challenging circumstances. No other venue offers the opportunity to present Christ in multiple styles in such a short period of time.
4. The American Camp Association³³ did a landmark study on 5,000 families who had participated in camp experiences. Here's what they discovered:

Campers Say—

- Camp helped me make new friends. (96%)
- Camp helped me get to know other campers who were different from me. (94%)
- Camp helped me feel good about myself. (92%)
- At camp, I did things I was afraid to do at first. (74%)

Parents Say—

- My child gained self-confidence at camp. (70%)
 - My child continues to participate in activities learned at camp. (63%)
 - My child remains in contact with friends made at camp. (69%)
5. This may be one of the children's first long-term independent experiences. The younger the child, the shorter the camping experience should be. At the first grade level, most children are ready for a one- or two-night experience. Away from home, children are learning what it is like to live what they believe, unmonitored by their parents' watchful eyes. This is among their first opportunities to practice more independent decision-making and discover the consequences of their decisions. If they do not treat a friend right, what will happen? If they don't brush their teeth, who will know? Counselors, of course, are there to insure safety. However, children can put into practice the things they have learned, or NOT put them into practice and discover the consequences for themselves on a limited and safe basis.

What Makes a Good Camp Experience?

1. The Environment

The first priority for any camp environment is safety. The facility must meet or exceed state codes for safety and sleeping space regulations. Water, either in the form of swimming pools or natural sources, is often a part of the camp experience. All necessary precautions need to be taken around the clock for water sources and water events.

Obviously, different areas of the country have different forms of natural resources, but the best campsites take advantage of the natural beauty of the region. This is especially important for the Christian camp because there is something about getting outside and close to everything God made that allows us to see Him more clearly. Theologians call this "natural revelation," and it literally means God revealing himself through nature. The best environments for camping allow God to speak for himself.

2. The Programming

The best camp programming is structured, but not regimented. There should be enough activities planned to accomplish the purposes and help campers engage in the kinds of activities that will be most formative. There should be enough open time that the pace of their daily lives is broken. If all you do is rush kids from place to place, they might as well be at home!

The program should offer choices of activities that allow campers to do what they love best. However, there should be required activities to challenge themselves to do new things they might never try on their own.

The programming should offer lots of opportunity for unique experiences in which kids can experience success. Competition should be used judiciously, so when kids fail, they fail together. When they succeed, it's not because of the success of a superstar, but it results from teamwork.

Some of the activities should allow kids to experience shared "embarrassment," such as participating in silly activities like eating spaghetti with a ladle or mixer attachments. This helps to develop the very important skill of confidence to try the unmanageable. The program should engage in community-building songs, traditions, and daily rituals, but children should never be singled out for a learning experience. Camping is designed to build a learning community, not to "teach a child a lesson." The lessons kids learn at camp should be a result of shared experiences.

3. The Staff

A good camping experience must be child-centered. Staff must be there for children, not for meeting their own agendas. Camp is very draining on the adults involved. Camp administrators need to fulfill the needs of the staff so they can fulfill the needs of the children assigned to their care.

4. Peer Interaction Opportunities

Camping research tells us that while children are looking to counselors and adults as role models during camp, they are looking to each other also. Here are just some of the peer interaction factors at work during camp:

- Bonding with peers.
- Interaction with peers who would normally be outside their environment; learning how other families live.
- Developing teamwork skills, including trust and appropriate dependence
- Developing leadership and team skills
- Improvement of communication skills
- Working with positive and negative peer pressure
- Meeting and making new friends
- Retaining friendships

Since all these factors are important, we should establish program activities to address each of them.

5. A Strong Beginning and a Great Ending

Beginning activities should help children feel safe, capable, and comfortable. Let the children know your operating standards, give them a preview of the daily schedule, help them know where to get help when they need it, and provide ways to help them get acquainted with their counselors and fellow campers.

Ending activities should give children a chance to review, celebrate, extend camp experiences, and nail down a memory. One district children's camp in Oregon allows children who have made a commitment to Christ to plant a wooden stake with their names and the date written on them in their stake garden. Children come back year after year and review their commitments to Christ, reflect on their growth, and remind themselves of their futures. Other traditions include signing T-shirts or autograph booklets, camp address directories, and a march to the busses through lines of cheering peers. Make the end of camp memorable!

Lesson 11: Programming for Children's Ministries

Due This Lesson

Two-page paper
Reading Resource 10-6
Reading Resource 10-7
Reading Resource 10-8
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- understand how to plan and implement programming for Sunday School
- understand how to plan and implement annual ministries
- articulate the value of a camping ministry

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page paper about how you plan to approach Easter, Christmas, and Halloween. Will you treat each of these days the same? What is your reasoning behind your perspective? Are there biblical reasons for your decision? How will you proceed if either your pastor or parents or both take an opposing view?

Read Resource 11-7.

Read Resource 11-8.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a list of Children's Ministries annual events and list them in order of importance to you. Give a rationale for your arrangement of the list.

In Lesson 17 you will each be asked to present a Children's Church lesson as a demonstration of a specific method of a lesson presentation. You may want to begin to think about what you will do and read Resource 16-9 as part of your advanced preparation. You will not be limited to the methods described in Resource 16-9. The specific assignment is given in Lesson 16.

Small Groups

Develop a Vision Statement

1. What do you want for children in your church?
2. What do you want for parents in your church?
3. What do you want for volunteers and workers in your church?
4. What do you believe about the relationship between children and God?
5. What do you believe about the relationship between children and the church?

Look at your answers. How can you summarize your answers in the shortest possible statement?

Annual Events

Here is a list of typical annual events. It is not exhaustive and may include some events that will not be part of your ministry.

- Back to School
- Harvest Party / Halloween
- Christmas programs and outreaches
- Easter
- Vacation Bible School
- Children's Retreat
- Children's Camp, Preteen Camp
- Children's Crusade or Revival
- Parents' Seminar

Basics for Event Planning

Prepare for the event using the five classic journalistic questions.

1. **WHO** will attend the event? How will you get them to attend?
2. **WHAT** will the participants do? What supplies will be needed?
3. **WHEN** will the event be held? (Check the church calendar for conflicts first.)
4. **WHERE** will the event be? What arrangements must be made to secure and set up the location?
5. **WHY** are we doing this event? Which of our purposes does it address?
6. **HOW** will you follow up this event?

Breaking Down the Tasks

To carry out an event:

- What do I need to be responsible for?
- What can I delegate and to whom? What support will be required to ensure success?
- What extra resources will be required the day of the event?
- What should we evaluate about the event, and how will we evaluate it?
- Prepare a timetable to ensure a well-organized and promoted event that will help you accomplish your goals.

Timetable for an Event

12 weeks before the event

Go over a checklist of supplies, such as food, prizes, crafts, or promotional materials and decide when to order them. You do not want to wait until the last minute to begin to gather materials because of the stress, confusion, and even the possibility of not getting what you need.

10 weeks

Recruit your volunteers and obtain commitments for working on the various areas of the event.

7 weeks to 9 weeks

Encourage the volunteers. Follow up to make sure they are still committed and on track with their preparations. Continue to motivate and share your passion for the event.

6 weeks

It is time to gather your promotional materials. This may include posters, pictures, letters to parents, church members, and the community, web-page advertisements, professionally-produced posters or brochures, and possible radio statements. This is a critical part of your event. Poor promotion will lead to a poor response. If you don't care enough to put time and resources into quality promotion, then why should others put time and energy into attending the event?

5 weeks

This is the time to start your public promotion. If you start too early, it will lose its excitement. If you wait too late, people will not have time to prepare and invite other people.

Now is the time to be very visible. Put your posters, pictures, and advertising in very visible, high-traffic areas. Begin making announcements from the pulpit and in classes. Get a notice in the newsletter. Send a letter home to parents. Hang your advertisements around town. Get an ad in the local paper, and begin the radio promotion. Not every event will need such large-scale promotion. Pick and choose what you will need to use. However, your response is often directly related to the quality of your advertising. Of course all of this is dependent upon the resources that are available. You must work within your budget.

2 weeks

Organize an evening for volunteers to gather together and phone all the children on the class attendance rolls. Divide up the names between the volunteers. Start early enough that you will not be calling at bedtime.

1 week

Set aside an hour, and meet with those who have helped with the planning. Review the entire event. Make sure every aspect is covered. Determine if what you need is in place and ready.

5 days before the event

Have the pastor send a letter encouraging children to attend the event.

3 days

Call all your volunteers to see if they have any questions. Encourage them and thank them for their work.

1 day

Have a short meeting with the volunteers to clarify and solidify the plans.

The day of the event

Make sure all volunteers arrive early and have their areas prepared. Take time to pray together. Ask the pastor to pray for the workers and for the event. Then enjoy your activity and the results of your work.

Following the event

Send thank-you cards to all volunteers and helpers. Have a notice in the church's newsletter to recognize the volunteers and thank them for their work. Contact all the visitors who came to the event. Alert the children to weekly opportunities at your church, and tell about any special events in the future.

Camping Ministry Resource

Counselor Job Description³⁴

Counselors, you know you are doing your job as a super counselor when. . .

- Your campers want to be near you.
- You can be fun and crazy.
- There is life and joy in your eyes.
- You are full of compliments and uplifting words.
- You are not quick to criticize or use sarcasm.
- You are available.
- You know how to pray and can pray with a camper.
- You desire to establish good relationships.
- You are never too busy.
- You make a point to know names, hobbies, likes, dislikes, camper's reason for coming to camp, and Christian status.
- You spend time interacting with the campers.
- You are filled with anticipation for each day at camp.
- You are willing to share over and over and over again.
- You can assure each camper that he or she is the most important person in the world.
- Your campers don't get bored because they never know what you are going to do.
- You make learning fun.
- You see the result of your work.
- You do not have to be asked twice.
- You delegate and assign different tasks when appropriate.
- You are able to take correction.
- You know the camp director can see potential in you.
- You recognize that your director is accountable to God and the parents for you.
- You realize the awesome responsibility you have for the parents' most prized earthly treasures (their children).
- You can say sincerely, "Follow me and do as I do!"

Many of Ways to Tell Your Camper, "I Love You."

- Memorize a verse together.
- Talk together about your favorite memories growing up.
- Ask, "If stranded alone on a desert island for a year, what would you like most to have with you, besides adequate food, clothing and water?"
- Make a craft together during free time.
- Ask "What is your favorite Bible story and why?"
- Make up and tell stories with your campers as heroes.
- Write a crazy poem together. Take turns writing the next line.
- Talk about an around-the-world vacation. Talk about the places to go and what could be done at each place.
- Play a game together (Sorry, Old Maid, Clue etc.).
- The Bible says "Love is kind." Think of a special way to show kindness to your campers today.
- Play tic-tac-toe in the dirt.
- Talk about your favorite Bible character. Why do you admire him or her?
- Ask, "If you could choose to be any animal for a day, what would you choose?"
- Take a nature hike together. Collect leaves, shells, rocks, sticks and whatever else you find.
- Ask, "What qualities do you most value in a friend?"
- Spend a special time praying for others.
- Ask "What have been the most encouraging things that have ever happened to you? How did it help you grow in confidence?"
- Imagine you have a time machine and could go back in history. What time period would you most like to visit and who would you like to meet?
- Ask, "What would be the most exciting surprise that could happen tomorrow?"
- Watch the sunset together.
- Get a box of paper clips and have a timed contest to see who can make the longest chain in a minute. Then connect the chains, and decorate your cabin with them.
- Say "please" and "thank you" every time you ask your camper to do something.
- Ask, "What are your dreams for the future?"
- Have a contest using anything the campers can find, make the highest object they can.
- Take turns answering, "What is the funniest thing that has happened to you?"
- While relaxing, talk about favorite memories.
- Use sidewalk chalk, and draw on the sidewalk together.
- Play hopscotch on the sidewalk. Draw it together with sidewalk chalk.
- Help them write a thank-you note to some one in camp (missionaries, bonfire speaker, cooks, staff).
- Be a "note hider" and place an encouraging note under your campers' pillow.
- Ask your camper, "What have you done that makes you most proud?"
- Ask, "What encouraging comments from others have been most meaningful to you?"
- Make a game of helping your camper find ways to serve someone else in camp each day. Encourage anonymity. Point out the importance of doing good for the sake of helping, not for being given any credit.
- Spend some time telling jokes together. Make sure the jokes are appropriate for this age level.

Corinthians 13 for Camp Counselors

Though I speak to my cabin with the combined eloquence of educators and angels, but have not LOVE, my words will do little good in the life of a camper.

And though I have the gift of entertaining crowds and understand all the intricacies of child psychology, if I am versed in all manner of modifying behavior, and though I have faith so as to move mountains of rebellion and resistance, so that I could deal with even the most difficult camper, yet have not LOVE, I am nothing.

Though I give up a relaxing week at home, give my muscles to be sore and my skin to be burned at the pool and on the water slide, though I give my patience to be tried by free-and not-so-free time, noisy meals, non-relaxing bonfires, and talkative campers after lights out, but have not LOVE, it profits me or my campers nothing.

LOVE is patient, LOVE is kind. LOVE doesn't demand its own way. LOVE believes the best, hopes the best, endures the worst and hardly even notices when others get things wrong. The hardships of this week will pass away, but its impact may go through eternity. Teach me LORD, to act in GREAT LOVE.

Mid-Camp Counselor Check-Up

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 6 how true each of these statements are for you today.

- | Oops! | | | Outstanding | | | |
|-------|---|---|-------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
| | | | | | | I have taken the "spiritual temperature" of each camper and know if he or she has accepted Christ, been sanctified, or called to ministry, etc. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I am aware of the general family situation of each of my campers. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I feel that I am well-prepared to lead evening devotions. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I feel that my campers are learning from my example. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I feel that I have been effective in discipline. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I am spending free time with my campers doing what THEY want to do. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I am putting the needs of my campers before my own needs. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I am setting a good example of Christ for my campers. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I am confident in my leadership abilities (able to follow directions, be on time, organize group activities, and maintain group enthusiasm). |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I feel confident in my ability to explain Christ to a child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I think that my kids like me. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I like being with the campers. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I am getting enough sleep to function well. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I am spending time with God each day. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | I feel that my spiritual needs are being met. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | If camp ended today, I would go home feeling I had a successful week. (Kids grew closer to Christ. Kids had fun. I grew closer to Christ.) |

What is the one thing about me that my campers will remember when this week is over?

Strategic Planning

There is an old saying, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.”

Ministry to children is meeting specific needs of children. It is not enough to plan some activities and hang out with the children, although these are important. There must be intentional attention to the needs children have—needs they and their parents may not even know they have.

This is where strategic planning comes into play. In the previous lesson, you developed a vision statement. This statement must be used as the foundation for all of your dreaming and planning. It will be important for you to be able to verbalize your vision and paint the picture so everyone involved can share in that vision.

This does not mean that everyone will agree with your vision. However, it must be a clear vision so those who have a different perspective can at least understand. You must know what you believe, why you believe it, where you are headed, and how you plan to get there. You must be able to share this vision and lead your team and children toward the accomplishment of your stated purpose.

What Is a Strategic Plan?

Your plan will be from God. He has called you, and He will guide and equip you. You can attempt to manufacture your plan on your own efforts, but you will find it lacks the power and anointing to inspire others and complete your goals. After asking God for direction in your ministry, be still before Him. Allow Him to structure where you are headed.

Your plan will be the clear response to these questions: Where are we going? Where do we plan to be at the end of the year? What is the ultimate place we want to be in this ministry?

Your strategic plan will inspire others, as well as attract leaders and families to join your mission.

Input from Others

You will be expected to come to the ministry with a well developed philosophy of children’s ministry and knowledge of what is critical in ministry to all children. However, every church is unique and will require a unique approach to implementing your philosophy. Your strategies will be based on your philosophy, theology, vision, and mission, but they will be fleshed out according to your particular situation.

Most children’s pastors do not start from scratch. There usually is a program in place. Even if there isn’t, there are expectations on the part of pastors and laity. Obtain information from those who have been working with the children and those who have a particular interest (such as parents). You should talk with those who have served in ministerial leadership with the children recently and the senior pastor. Allow their thoughts and concerns to inform you as you review the basic strategic plan you formulated. Are there things that should be added, subtracted, or modified?

Once you have evaluated all the input, think in terms of one-year, three-year, and five-year blocks. Ask yourself, "What is the greatest priority for this Children's Ministry?"

You do not have to accomplish everything immediately, and you will do better if you proceed with intent and energy. Bring other people into the conversation to help you sort through all the ideas.

Your senior pastor should have the opportunity to evaluate your plan in the context of the overall church plan. Your advisory council will have valuable wisdom. Even children can offer perspective to your planning.

When the plan is complete, put it into written and/or visual form, and share it with all the interested parties.

This strategic plan is just that—a plan. It is not poured in concrete and inflexible; it is dynamic. As you become immersed in your ministry and the children's lives, your plan may need to roll and bend. That does not mean your foundations have changed. Your plan is a map to provide direction to your ministry. It will keep you from getting distracted by side roads that look interesting but may not lead to your destination.

However, it is not unusual to find more efficient ways to get to your destination as you learn the local turf. When this does happen, let those who are following you know about the changes well ahead of time.³⁵

Children's Ministry Budget

"Your budget should reflect the philosophies of your ministry, not drive them."

This implies that how you spend your money shows what is important to you. The budget reflects who you are and your philosophy of ministry. However, if your program is hampered by money problems, then the money begins to dictate what is important and how you can proceed.

It is not possible to give you a guideline that shows how you will allocate the money and how much each budget item will receive. Every church and every program is unique and has unique needs and resources. Therefore we will look at guiding principles to budget and manage your ministry money.

A budget is basically a financial plan of how you propose to fund your ministry. Your budget will help you analyze your ministry needs, prioritize your finances, and manage your resources so you can pay your bills. You will have three basic types of expenses: fixed, variable, and one-time expenses.

Fixed costs are like a car payment. You pay the same amount, at the same time every month until the debt is paid. It is easy to plan for fixed costs. There are few fixed costs that your ministry is directly responsible for.

Variable costs are commodities that will be purchased time and again, but they may vary as to quantity, price, and time of purchase. This includes such things as teaching materials or gasoline for the vans. Estimate these variable costs the best that you can. You may want to err on the high side so you do not end up short at the end. For example, if you believe your material cost for the year will be somewhere between \$800 and \$1,000, you would budget \$1,000.

One-time costs are items you will have to purchase once over several years. Sometimes these are called "capital costs." They may be big ticket items such as computers, copiers, or projectors.

Steps in Developing a Budget

1. Look at the ministry's financial history, or look at a comparable ministry within the church. This will answer some of these questions:
 - From where does the money come?
 - Where has most of the money been spent in the past?
 - What type of fund raisers were used to bring in money? Which fund-raisers appeared to be successful and which ones were less profitable?
 - What are the annual events that need to be funded?
 - Were there ever registration fees?
 - What past budget items can be eliminated?
 - What should be added to reflect the new ministry plan?
2. Your values should be reflected in your budget. If your priority is to train staff, then the budget should reflect training costs. If your priority is upgrading your safety procedures, you must account for those costs. Don't get so caught up in the

paper and glue items that you have no budget left for important development of ministry.

3. Find out how the financial process works.
 - Are you able to buy what you need when you need it? Do you use your own money or do you have a church credit card?
 - Is there petty cash available for urgent needs?
 - Who writes the checks and what is the request process? Do you use purchase orders?
 - Are you free to select the vendors you would prefer to use or is there an established relationship that needs to be honored?
 - Do you have to work any extra purchase into next year's budget?
 - Do parents pay for any of their children's involvement or do you have to raise all the money for each event?

4. The key to financial success is to develop an accurate budget, manage it well, and keep a constant, close watch on spending. You will need to read your monthly reports carefully to make sure you are still on track. You must say no to some requests so you have the funds to say yes to others.

Lesson 12: Developing a Strategic Plan, Calendar, and Budget

Due This Lesson

Two-page paper
Reading Resource 11-7
Reading Resource 11-8
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- understand how to administer a strategic plan for your ministry
- understand how to plan a ministry calendar
- understand how to establish a budget for your ministry

Homework Assignments

Work on a budget for your children's ministry. Consult at least three sources for pricing supplies. Decide on two sources for purchasing supplies.

Read Resource 12-7.

Read Resource 12-8.

Read Resource 12-9.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section about your strategic plan for children's ministry.

Resources

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/childrensministry/articles/nobudgetnoproblem.html>

What Is a Strategic Plan?

1. Your philosophy—how ministry to children should be accomplished
2. Your vision—big dream for what your ministry will look like in the future
3. Your mission—the big goals of what your ministry will accomplish
4. Consideration of the overall mission and vision of the church
5. Resulting in a direct plan of action for one year, three years, and five years in the future

Practical Steps

Some practical steps to develop a strategic plan for Children's Ministry would include:

Step 1: Be quiet before God.

Step 2: Write all the words you hope will describe your ministry in three to five years.

Step 3: List qualities visitors will notice about the children in your ministry.

Step 4: Visualize the types of leaders and the number of leaders you will need.

Step 5: Dream about new ministries that might emerge.

Step 6: Picture how you will evangelize the children in your community.

Step 7: Name the service opportunities you will provide for children.

Step 8: Describe your dream relationship with parents.

Step 9: Write your plan to continue your professional development.

NEXT

Choose ONE dream item from your list above.

How can this dream become a reality?

Action Plan

What needs to happen to get you from where you are to where you want to be?

What is a reasonable timetable for each step?

What barriers might you face?

What are two ideas for overcoming each barrier?

How many people will be needed to help you accomplish this goal?

What will this dream cost (financially, personally)?

Sample Action Plan

Goal: I must nurture my spiritual life.

1. I will arrive 30 minutes early each morning and shut my door in order to spend that time with God.
 - I will purchase a book, such as *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants*, and use this book to guide my devotions.
 - I will find an accountability partner/mentor.
 - I will get away for a spiritual retreat two days every six months to read, pray, dream, and refresh my soul.
2. Reasonable timetables
 - I will order the book online today.
 - I will choose an accountability partner by the end of the month. I will write the event as an appointment in my calendar.
 - I will include my retreat dates in my annual ministry calendar. I will schedule the time at the retreat center the day after the annual calendar is approved.
3. What barriers might I encounter?
 - Time management/my kid's school schedule
 - Other pressing demands of a new job
 - Not knowing who might be the best accountability partner
4. Two ideas for each barrier
 - Commit to an earlier bedtime, and ask my spouse to take care of getting children to school.
 - Make others aware that this half hour is sacred. Mark it off my available times.
 - Ask my pastor for suggestions for an accountability partner. Talk to several people before choosing one.
5. How many people will I need to accomplish this goal?
 - I will need the support of my spouse, my pastor, and the office staff to protect the devotional time.
 - I will need about five options and one choice of an accountability partner.
6. What will be the cost?
 - The book will cost about \$15.00
 - The retreats will cost about \$50.00 per night. Plan for \$250.00 per year.
 - It will cost me a half hour each day and 96 additional hours each year.
 - It will cost me the time I usually spend in the car with my kids. Can I make this up somewhere?

Practical Steps of Calendar Planning³⁶

1. Place all the previously-expected activities on the calendar first. These would include:
 - Local Church Dates—revivals, all-church picnic, holiday services and activities, and other age-level ministry schedules, such as VBS and Children’s Week
 - Weekly Events—Sunday School, Children’s Church, Caravan, Quizzing
 - District Church Dates—children’s camp, camp meeting, retreats, conferences
 - Community or School Dates—first and last day of school, spring break, sports tournaments
 - Family Dates—birthdays, vacation days
 - Dates you add to accomplish your ministry plan
2. Create a Seasonal Schedule. Each season will have a specific focus or goal unique to that time.
 - Late summer, focus on recruiting and training volunteers.
 - Fall, focus on building relationships and creating the group norms and group identity.
 - Winter, focus on personal development and leadership development—Bible Quizzing, worship team practice, drama team practice
 - Spring, focus on celebrating the year’s accomplishments and preparation for VBS, camp, and summer service opportunities.
3. Begin to shape and mold the specifics within this framework. Remember to be clear about the purpose of any event to stay within the stated mission of the ministry. Keep your purposes and activities on-track with others in the church.
4. Decide what your patterns of recurring activities will be. For example, you may have an activity the first three Saturdays of each month from 5:00–8:00 in the evening. The first Saturday of each month is for preschool children and their parents. The second Saturday is for first through fourth graders. The third Saturday is for Preteens. You may have Preteen Discipleship every Thursday afternoon or Mom’s Day Out each Tuesday morning.

Decide what annual events you will plan. Examples might be a fifth- and sixth-grade service project or a family retreat.

Mark the time for staff training days and parent education events that do not directly involve the children.

Keep in mind your schedule is not the only schedule children have to deal with. They also have sports events, lessons, school calendars, family calendars, and so forth.

5. After obtaining approval for your calendar, distribute it to everyone in the church to avoid any last-minute conflicts that could put the events in jeopardy. Ways to do this:
 - Use the newsletter to provide all the important dates for the coming month.
 - List the week's activities in the church bulletin on Sundays.
 - Keep an updated bulletin board that lists the events for the year on it.
 - If your church has a web site, have a page that lists the year's events and then the week's events with all of the details included.
 - Provide a letter to parents each week to explain the week's activities.

Guidelines for Preparing a Budget

1. Be accurate in your estimate of costs.
2. Be wise in your purchases.
3. Indicate what materials and equipment to be purchased are universally functional.
4. Be aware of complex and highly-technical equipment that can be operated by only one or two people.
5. Make a priority what is needed for safety and security.
6. Do not sign contracts with anyone until you know exactly what you will receive.
7. Develop a strategy for filing and submitting your receipts.
8. Ask questions of the people responsible for budget development.
9. Keep a file of your financial documents.
10. List typical expenditures.

Salaries	Phone	Hospitality
Travel expenses	Promotion/Advertising	Food
Rental equipment	Printing	Repairs
Staff development	Music	Retreat speakers
Educational materials	Insurance	Miscellaneous
Craft and other supplies	Envelopes, stamps, and postage	

Example of Budget Categories:

- Miscellaneous 5%
- Summer Activities 15%
- Sunday School 20%
- Equipment Upgrades 5%
- Administrative 15%
- Evangelism Events 40%

Creating a Safe Nursery Environment

We often focus on the nursery as a safety-sensitive site. A safe nursery is important, but an attitude of keeping our children safe must be cultivated at all ages and in all areas. Let's begin with the basics for the nursery environment before we talk about other age levels.

A designated caregiver/worker should make a quick check of the nursery before each use. It is a quick checklist to use.

- Look for small or dangerous objects, such as pins, buttons, coins, hot beverages, broken toys. Look on the floor, on shelves, and under furniture. Any object smaller than a fist should be inspected for safety. Any object smaller in diameter than a fifty-cent piece should be removed from the infant/toddler nursery.
- Make sure all of the electrical outlets are covered. Do not assume this is the case. It is possible that someone used a radio or vacuum and did not replace the cover.
- Check the windows and screens to be sure they are fastened. You wouldn't want to lose a child through an opened window!
- Do not leave any cleaning supplies out. All cleaning supplies should be kept in a locked cabinet, even those you use in the diaper-changing area.
- Make sure gates and doors can be secured. These devices must be working for each session.
- Look for "finger pinchers." Rocking chairs, drawers that pull in and out, and toy boxes with lids can be dangerous to little fingers.
- Make sure your equipment meets current safety standards. For example, crib slats should be no more than 2 3/8" apart.
- Look for protruding edges and sharp corners.
- Make sure there are no dangling cords or anything with which a baby could become tangled or be choked.

Diaper Changing Policies

Diaper changes can be an opportunity for one-on-one care for children. This time allows workers the opportunity to praise God for the wonderful bodies the babies have, so diaper-changing policies should include healthy attitudes as well as healthy practices. The policy should be posted at the changing area. A sample policy might be:

1. Cover the changing area with protective pad. Obtain all supplies from the diaper bag before taking the child to the changing area.
2. Use clean gloves for changing each baby.
3. Return the child to your coworker. Note: Always have another adult present.

4. Remove the changing table cover and discard it. Disinfect the area immediately.
5. Remove your gloves, and wash your hands before handling any of the other babies.

The changing time is a great opportunity to sing silly songs with the child, using toes, tummy, legs, arms, as the subject. The words can be posted by the changing table.

Well-Baby Policy

You need a strong policy concerning sick babies. It is important for parents to provide loving care for a sick baby at home. This protects other babies from infection. Sometimes babies develop symptoms of illness very quickly, and parents don't realize their child has become ill. It is each worker's responsibility to watch for signs of illness including:

- Fever
- Nasal discharge that is either thick or darkly colored
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Rash or other open skin problem
- Uncharacteristic lethargy (slow responsiveness or failure to engage with others)

If children arrive with or develop any of these symptoms while in the nursery, parents should be advised of the well-baby nursery policy.

A sample policy statement might say:

We are sorry if your child is not feeling well enough to be in the nursery. For the well-being of all babies, we want to make sure your child gets the individual care he or she needs at home. We are not allowed to keep a child in the nursery if he or she:

- Has or has had a fever above 99 degrees in the last 24 hours.
- Is vomiting, has diarrhea, or has had diarrhea within the last 24 hours.
- Has nasal discharge that is either thick or darkly colored.
- Is showing signs of physical distress such as being lethargic or in pain (such as ear-pulling).

Be sure of our prayers. Please call the church office if you need extra support while your child is ill.

Injuries

In spite of your best efforts, children can be hurt in the nursery. One child can hit another child with a toy. New walkers often trip and fall. Some children bite another child. Keep a supply of ice packs and washcloths for such an event. (Remember never to hold a frozen item directly against a baby's delicate skin. Never hold a cold object against a baby's skin for longer than a count of five.)

Whenever a child experiences an injury that causes pain, redness, or possible bruising, you should document it with an injury report to the parents and keep a copy on file at the church. If there is bleeding or immediate swelling, the parent should be called on for immediate advice.

Parent Call Systems and Pick-Up Procedures

There are many ways to communicate with parents during service times. There are commercial systems of beepers or numbers flashed on a screen. There are private cell phones. There are ushers who can be paged or signaled.

Think about what system works best for your church, but NEVER leave a nursery attendant in a position to choose between taking care of a hurt or sick child or neglecting or endangering the rest of the children.

In the past, small churches didn't worry about who picked up or dropped off children. Everyone knew everyone else in the church. But as churches grew, when families separated, or a community became aware tragically of the dangers of snatched children, they have been forced to become more protective of the young children in their care.

Even when everything seems perfectly fine, it is better to be safe than sorry. Here are some procedures churches could use:

- When a child is dropped off, require the parent to designate who the pick-up person will be.
- Exchange a token such as an ID card or beeper. Give it to the parent at drop off and require it back to release the child.
- Require that only a parent may pick up a child.
- Have the parents sign a standing release form that lists several people who may pick up the child. Do not release the child to anyone not on the list.
- Require picture ID for anyone the worker does not know by sight.

Nursery Worker Requirements

Another health-related issue for church nurseries is the number and qualifications of the workers present. All workers should be screened including church teens, but there are some additional concerns with nursery attendants, particularly if they are paid workers.

Ideally, someone who is CPR and Safety Certified should be in the nursery each week. If that is not possible, you, as the children's pastor, need to keep current certification.

In the infant nursery, there should never be a worker alone. While state guidelines vary, the number of adults in the infant nursery should never be lower than two adults with a one- to-three ratio after that. For example, you are fine with two workers until you have five babies. You should add one worker for six and another for nine babies, and so on.

In the toddler nursery, the same rules apply with a ratio of one adult to every four babies. When possible, some children's pastors like to schedule one worker for every three to four infants and toddlers, with one person as a greeter/changer for each session.

All workers should wash their hands frequently and always after wiping a nose, drool, or any bodily fluid (as well as after wiping their own noses). A bottle of hand sanitizer can be kept out of babies' reach for emergency use.

Child Safety and Protection

The greatest legal risks that pertain to children's ministry

1. **Negligent Selection of Church Workers.** Negligent selection suggests carelessness or a failure to exercise reasonable care in choosing workers.
2. **Negligent Retention of Church Staff.** A church is legally responsible if it fails to respond to credible information suggesting a church employee or volunteer represents a risk of harm to others. Initiate a thorough investigation into any credible allegation, and impose appropriate restrictions on any proven wrongdoer.
3. **Violation of Employment Laws.** Churches can be held responsible for wrongful termination and discrimination. Church leaders should seek the assistance of an attorney when considering the termination or discipline of any employee. No federal law, however, prohibits churches from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation. Several states have such laws, but they exempt churches. (You will need to keep updated on these laws in your state.)
4. **Negligent Supervision of Staff and Activities.** Churches have been sued on this basis in several contexts, including child molestation, injuries during church-sponsored events, and injuries in a church nursery. Churches can take several precautions to reduce this risk. For example, in off-site activities, ensure an adequate number of adults are present. Also, adopt a two-adult policy specifying that no minor is allowed to be alone with an adult during any church activity—this includes giving children rides home. This rule reduces the risk of child molestation and accusations of molestation.
5. **Failure to Report Child Abuse.** In many states, ministers are “mandatory reporters,” meaning they can be criminally liable for failing to report evidence of child abuse. Check your state laws several times each year, since this is an area of law that changes often.

A church's response to these risks should be three-fold:

- **Prevention** (Example: All child caregivers must go through the screening application and approval procedures. Some churches also require training/information workshops.)
- **Reporting** (Example: If an accident or abuse occurs, immediately contact the Children's Pastor. Document everything.)
- **Responding** (Example: If the accused is a leader or volunteer, remove the accused from the position until allegations are cleared or substantiated. Respect the rights of the accused as well as those of the accuser.)

If the children's pastor does not handle any questionable situations properly, he or she jeopardizes the senior pastor, the church board, and the reputation of the church. However, “due diligence” in the areas of prevention, reporting, and responding can protect all three in the event of a true problem.

Risk is always present, but risk management becomes an issue of both competency and faith. We do our best to be diligent, and we trust the Lord to help us as we act responsibly.

Specific steps to take to be responsible

1. Establish emergency procedures and policies.

- Have an evacuation plan posted in each place children gather. It is wise to plan periodic reviews of this plan with the children. As part of your annual routine, conduct periodic "drills" for the types of emergencies in your geographic area.
- Have emergency contact information for each child on record and accessible to leaders (even on trips). Include contact information for parents and doctors as well as warnings about allergies, medications, and general health and insurance information. The most important aspect of this information may be the parent's signature to obtain medical treatment authorization in case of emergency.

2. Be proactive in your building safety.

A professional safety audit is one way to insure your building is in top shape. A local fire marshal can help you determine whether there are areas or items that should be repaired. However, have adequate resources set aside to fix anything the fire marshal might mandate.

3. Provide adequate adult coverage for each event.

The "Two-Adult" rule is wise at every age. It prevents anyone from having to leave a group of children unsupervised in an emergency. This rule also protects from allegations of wrongdoing. A ratio goal for a preschool class is one adult to four children, one to eight for early elementary, and one to ten for upper elementary.

If these ratios are unrealistic for a church setting, plan to have a back-up person wandering from class to class, watching for needs as they arise.

Provide supervision during transition times as well as during class or worship. Even though elementary children are more self-reliant than younger children, they still need adult monitoring and support.

Some of the most difficult disciplinary situations occur during transition times. You don't want children running into traffic areas after having been dismissed to meet their parents. Your responsibility to children does not end until the designated adult has picked up the child and assumed responsibility for the child's care.

4. Insist on volunteer screening and selection.

The biggest issue in protecting the children from abuse is screening and training your workers.

Many churches operate out of a simple trust rule. It goes something like this: These persons seem nice; they claim to be Christians; they seem to know what they are doing. "Sure, they can work with the children!"

This is dangerous. In most cases your instincts may be correct. But if you are wrong, immeasurable damage can happen to a child, his or her family, and the entire church community.

Do not hesitate to ask **all** individuals to go through a screening process. If you are consistent in asking every potential children's worker to do this, you can reduce the complaints or feelings of being uncomfortable about the screening process. This includes the church teens who want to help in the children's department.

Some basic steps in the screening process:

- Make it official that everyone who has contact with the children will go through the same screening process.
- Provide each person with an employment or volunteer application.
- Have the person fill out a screening form.
- Ask for references, *and* check the references.
- Conduct a criminal records check (fingerprint, if possible).
- Make a copy of a photo ID, and keep it on record.
- Any individual wanting to work with children (except for the children's pastor) must attend church for at least six months before applying to work with the children.
- Conduct a personal interview.

The only exception to the criminal record or fingerprinting rule is someone who can document their records have already been checked (such as a certificated teacher, child care provider, or foster parent). These individuals, however, should go through the rest of the selection process. Even if people feel this is overkill, the message that it sends to everyone is that the church takes seriously the responsibility of protecting its children. Most people will appreciate the dedication to protecting both the children and themselves.

5. Provide volunteer training and behavior standards.

Volunteers must be aware of the potential of abuse allegations. Some basic safety policies should be put into place to protect the workers as well as children. Here are some examples of policies that protect:

- Have observation windows or half-doors for all classrooms, or require an open-door policy for rooms with children above preschool age.
- Adults should never be alone with one child—this may mean asking a parent to stay until the additional worker arrives.
- A husband and wife working together cannot be considered as part of the "never alone" policy. They must be joined by a third unrelated person.
- When a child leaves the classroom to go to the bathroom or other designated location, observe the "buddy system," sending another child with him or her.
- Establish clear discipline policies and clearly define what disciplinary measures are unacceptable in your program.

All workers must be given very clear, written guidelines about reporting potential abuse and responding to abuse that they observe, as well as to violations of the church discipline policy. Any concerns should be reported immediately to the children's pastor.

The Prevent Abuse America campaign reports that fewer than 50% of people who observe abuse will do anything about it. The campaign offers these guidelines that can be shared with volunteers if they observe a situation they feel is potentially abusive:

- Start a conversation with the adult to direct attention away from the child.
- Divert the child's attention (if misbehaving) by talking to the child.
- Look for an opportunity to praise the child or parent.
- If the child is in danger, offer assistance.
- Avoid negative remarks or looks that are likely to increase the parent's anger and could make matters worse.

Volunteers should report any incidents of this nature to the children's pastor, who should investigate, whether it is a volunteer or a parent who is involved.

For more information, go to <http://www.childabuse.com/brandrelease.htm>.

Designing a Facility for Children

Think aspects of a room that influences your behavior. For example: The way the seats are arranged influences what direction you face and whether the focus is on the teacher at the front of the room, or on each other in a circle.

The set up and environment of the classroom in the church helps to establish a climate that is safe and comfortable. The way you structure your classroom will impact behavioral responses. Let's look at some of the specifics.

Table and Chairs

As was mentioned in *Providing Christian Education for All Ages* module, the size of the chairs and tables in a children's class should be age-appropriate. Comfortable seating (feet on the floor, arms at comfortable work level) is very important.

Use the space in your rooms to your advantage. If you have furniture in your classroom that is not being used, remove it. Arrange the furniture so the students can move easily from one activity to the other. The arrangement should promote what you are hoping will occur.

A good measure of floor space for children is 25–30 square feet per learner. If you are going to have group activities, place chairs around a smaller, round, or semi-round table.

Noise Protection

If you have to raise your voice to talk over noises from other rooms or your students are continually distracted, consider noise reduction options. Carpet can absorb sound and even enhance the use of floor space for certain activities. Installing ceiling panels or even sound absorbing mobiles can assist in noise reduction. Creative arrangement of classrooms and scheduling may result in placing groups together who will not hinder each other.

Lighting

Low-light can cause a strain on children's eyes. Lighting influences the moods of children. Changing the wattage of the bulbs can change the atmosphere. Opening curtains or adding additional fixtures may also be a solution to a dimly-lit room. A dimmer switch can reduce the energy level for storytelling.

Temperature

Test the temperature at different levels to assure comfort for the children. For example, a thermostat at an adult's eye level is measuring the temperature at that height in the room, not down on the floor where children spend their time. It may be comfortable for adults but cold for children. Consider the differences in room temperature without the children in the room and when the room is full of children.

Colors

Bright, lively colors welcome children and stimulate them. If your classrooms are dark or dreary, a coat of paint could brighten the room. Too much red, however, can induce more aggressive kinds of behavior.

Visuals

Pictures, posters, drawings and charts stimulate children. If placed at eye level and updated at least once a month, they can draw children into your lessons. The walls should not be busy, but simple and varied. For fun, hang a visual from the ceiling from time to time.

Storage

Most children enjoy taking responsibility for their own materials. Shelving that is low and labeled with names can help teach children responsibility.

If more than one group uses the room, you may need a resource room where teachers check out materials before class.

Safety Features

Some safety features are large and involve capital expense. Doors with windows or half-doors provide a measure of protection for workers and children and may save the church in the long run. Windows need to be evaluated. Sunlight and fresh air are wonderful but if windows are too low they can be a safety hazard or allow someone to spy on children from a distance.

Other safety issues involve diligence in paying attention. Attention to cleanliness—toys, carpets, restroom, garbage, odors. Attention to broken objects—toys, chairs, chipped paint. Attention to anything that could cause a child harm.

All of these suggestions have implications for behavioral and learning outcomes. Think about these environmental characteristics, and use your environment as a serious part of the educational experience.

Lesson 13: The Church—A Safe Environment

Due This Lesson

Budget
Reading Resource 12-7
Reading Resource 12-8
Reading Resource 12-9
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- understand what a safe environment looks like
 - understand potential legal and ethical issues
 - understand important components of the structure of a children's ministry facility

Homework Assignments

Examine the policies of your church concerning screening, assigning, and training volunteers. Evaluate the main safety issues we discussed in class. Write a two-page paper on your findings. If your church doesn't have these policies in place, make a specific recommendation for what policies you believe should be implemented.

Visit a mid-sized or large church in your community and obtain copies of their policies. Also, ask to see their facilities and ask questions about how they carry out their policies and procedures.

Read Resource 13-3.

Read Resource 13-4.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section with your thoughts about creating a safe environment for children.

Looking Ahead

Bring copies of the curriculum that you are using for Sunday School, Wednesday evening or other children's programs. Also, bring other curriculum that you may have as part of your personal resources.

Diaper Changing Songs

Use these songs to help a baby identify body parts and encourage safe and fun changing times that teach Bible truths. Wiggle each body part mentioned as you sing these songs.

The Boo Song (to the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot")

*Tiny little hands and tiny little nose,
Tiny little feet and tiny little toes.
God designed your body just the way it's made.
You can trust His plans and never be afraid (boo!).
(Cover the baby's eyes then uncover them on the word boo.)*

Growing Like God Planned (to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle")

*Big strong arms and small strong hands,
You are growing like God planned.
God does have some plans for you
For all you say and all you do.
Big strong arms and small strong hands
You are growing like God planned.
(Touch the baby's arms and hands as you sing the song.)*

The Praise Song (to the tune of "Camptown Races")

*Put your arms up in the air. Praise God! Praise God!
Put your arms up in the air. Praise God all day long.
Put your arms up high. Put your arms down low,
Put your arms up in the air and shake them very slow.
(Mention different body parts during the diaper change. Slip the diaper under the baby when you sing about the baby's legs.)*

Glad You're You (to the tune of "This Old Man")

*Our Lord God, He made one,
He made one little belly button,
With a clap-clap, pat-pat
I'm telling you it's true!
I'm so glad God made you YOU!*

*Our Lord God, He made two
Little eyes for peek- a-boo.
With a clap-clap, pat-pat
I'm telling you it's true!
I'm so glad God made you YOU!*

Designing a Children's Room

Design a child's classroom. It should be an effective environment where learning can take place. What would be your ideal classroom? Start with the age group and number of children in attendance. Include information about each of the following areas.

- Size of room
- Access to room
- Location of restroom
- Tables and chairs
- Toys
- Noise Protection
- Lighting
- Temperature
- Safety features
- Colors
- Visuals
- Storage

Selecting Curriculum

First, let's learn some of the language of curriculum producers:

Scope is the range of material covered. In Christian Education curriculum, we know the scope is primarily the Bible. But when curriculum publishers talk about scope, they will be telling you precisely what portions of the Bible the curriculum is going to cover.

Sequence tells when the scope of the curriculum will be covered. Often publishers create a document that is called a "Scope and Sequence" to help you understand what materials will be covered at a particular age level and the total range of passages and themes to be covered through all levels of the curriculum.

Let's look at an example from WordAction Curriculum that shows the scope and sequence of the curriculum for *Toddlers/Twos and Babies, too!* for one year of lessons. In the first column you see the sequence. In the second column you see the scope by topic. In the web version of this scope and sequence, you click on the topic and see the Scripture emphasis for each lesson.

The second chart shows a scope and sequence for the same age level from a different publisher. It shows the general Biblical emphasis of each unit and shows a two-year scope rather than the one-year scope presented in the first sample.

	Toddlers/Twos and Babies, too!
Fall 2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God Made Me Special 2. Jesus Loves Me 3. Thank You, God, for My Family
Winter 2007-08	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus Is Born 2. God Made Animals 3. The Bible Is a Special Book
Spring 2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God Made Food and Water 2. We Say "Hooray" for Jesus 3. Thank You, God, for My Church
Summer 2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God Made the World 2. God Cares for Me 3. We Can Praise God

	Toddlers & 2s
Fall 2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God Made My Face (Genesis, Psalms) 2. God Made My Body (Genesis, Psalms) 3. God Gives Us Food (Genesis) Bonus Unit: God Helped David (1 Samuel, Psalms)
Winter 2007-08	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus Was a Special Baby (Matthew, Luke) 2. God Gives Me Good Things (Matthew) 3. God Made People (Genesis) Bonus Unit: God Takes Care of People (Exodus)

Spring 2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I Am Happy at Church (Psalms) 2. Jesus Loves Me (Mark) 3. God Made Everything (Genesis) Bonus Unit: Jesus Is the Son of God (Matthew, Luke, John)
Summer 2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God Made Animals (Genesis) 2. God Cared for Noah (Genesis) 3. God Gives Us Food (Genesis) Bonus Unit: Joshua Obey God (Numbers, Joshua)

By looking at the scope and sequence for all age levels, you can see publishers take great care to expose children to all the relevant and age-appropriate stories and concepts of the Scripture over the course of their childhood.

Some curricula repeat the same theme at different age levels. **Spiraling** means **revisiting** the content in new ways at new age levels. It would be sad if a child heard the story of Jonah every quarter. It would take valuable time they could be using to learn other stories about obedience to God. However, it would be equally sad if children were exposed to the story of Jonah when they were three and never heard it again, or they never had the opportunity to think about what obedience to God looks like to an eleven-year old rather than a two-year-old.

Reviewing the Scope and Sequence will give you an opportunity to assess the curriculum for balance, thoroughness of coverage of the whole Bible, and spiraling for review and depth coverage of important Bible basics. It will also allow you to get a quick visual representation of the appropriateness of the themes covered.

A curriculum is developed in response to standards students are expected to meet, content they are expected to know, or behavioral objectives (behaviors students are expected to perform). A published curriculum attempts to match age-appropriate activities and learning methodologies to the standards or objectives and the specific content of the lesson. In Christian Education curriculum, the Bible is always the basis of the content, though it may be framed as a theme that doesn't quote the specific Bible verse it is drawn from (especially in the preschool and nursery levels).

Curriculum development is a complicated process that requires understanding of human development, learning theory, knowledge of methodology, content expertise, and creativity. It requires the ability to organize the big picture, add the details, and express all the material through effective written communication. Usually the process involves teamwork between writers, editors, and reviewers before it is published. Because of this review process, there are a few things you can expect from published curricula:

- Materials are generally developmentally sound.
- There is a strategy behind the activities.
- Editors pay careful attention to a particular theological position.
- The writers and editorial staff strive to connect a variety of resources to the material printed in the teacher's guide to make teaching a lesson simple and effective.

Curricula differ in several important ways:

- The philosophy of learning and the effectiveness in implementing the philosophy.
- The level of emphasis on different styles of learning and teaching

- Physical presentation (glitz)
- Effectiveness of the supplementary material available or required
- Cost
- Degree of teacher friendliness/ease of preparation
- Theological/church orientation

The last thing on the list is perhaps the first thing that should be considered and is often the most subtle of all the characteristics listed. Since there are so many things on which Christians agree, it can be very difficult to tell where points of disagreement begin and end.

What difference do the conflicts make to little children? The answer to that question was discussed in the beginning of our course. **Small differences in the foundation of children's faith become magnified as they grow and mature. If their foundation is built on what our tradition sees as misinformation or tiny misconceptions about God, we run the risk of building a faith that is misdirected. Most teachers do not have the theological background to think through the long-term consequences of small theological details. This is the main reason to recommend denominationally-developed curriculum as the primary source of Christian education in the church. In addition to being educationally sound, it is carefully reviewed for theological consistency.**

If you choose to use supplemental curricula for other programs in your church, you as the children's pastor are responsible for the theological consistency of the curriculum you choose. If you don't have a strong theological background, you will need support from someone who does. In fact, in making choices about curriculum for a program, it is important to have support from a variety of individuals to ensure that the curriculum you purchase really meets your needs.

Step-by-step plan for choosing a curriculum

1. Ask yourself these questions:

- What are your program goals and missional values? Remember the documents you have already developed regarding their mission, vision, and strategic action plans.
- For what is the curriculum to be used? Define the type of program, the purpose of the program, and the program goals.
- Who will teach this curriculum? Will the teachers have a strong personal commitment and strong background to bring to this program? Or, will you be recruiting and training brand new volunteers?
- Who will be taught? What are the characteristics of this group of children? Is this program geared toward outreach? Will it be church kids on an evening after a day of school? Will it be a group of preschoolers in a morning Mom's Day Out program? What makes this group unique? What are the particular needs of this group?
- What are your assets and limitations in this context? Do you have a great space available, or are you working in an inadequate facility for activities such as group games? Are most workers you would ordinarily use to help in choir

practice or other activities during this program? What will make this program easy to administer? What may be a challenge?

- What is your budget? While dollars shouldn't drive decisions, there is no point in evaluating a curriculum that costs \$400 a month over your budget. Knowing your financial resources is an important part of making good decisions.

After you have answered these questions for yourself, you are ready to take the active steps of beginning a curriculum adoption process.

2. **Extend your work force.** Choose several people to work with you. Should you include parents? Teachers? Board members? Children (with parental supervision)?

Decide whether you will each evaluate different curricula, or if you will each evaluate the same curricula and compare analyses.

3. **Evaluate**—To evaluate means “to give value to.” Review with your team the program purposes you've established. Make a list together of what you want to accomplish. What are the needs of the teachers? What results would the congregation like to see?

Make a list. This becomes the basis for what you will be looking for in the curriculum you select. Your needs and values will be different than those of the church across town. Be careful not to be swayed by models that don't apply to your church.

Here is a sample of one group's evaluation list for a children's church curriculum:

We believe children:

- Need opportunities to build Christian friendships.
- Worship best through active participation.
- Need engaging, appealing music that leads them into worship.
- Worship best with life-applicable and meaningful activities.
- Worship best with open discussions that foster creative thinking.
- Worship best with multi-sensory, age-appropriate activities that reflect multiple learning styles and intelligences.
- Need to experience how biblical truths reveal the nature of God.
- Need a plan to take biblical truths into everyday life.
- Need opportunities to make faith commitments.

We believe teachers:

- Need easy-to-prepare materials.
- Rely on good background information, including Bible commentary.
- Need clear directions.
- Need good questions to ask.
- Want a clear presentation of required preparation.
- Need to feel confident the theological perspective is sound and in accord with their denominational doctrine.

When you have all these ideas recorded, you can arrange them in order from most important to least important. Make note of the values that cannot be compromised or made up for by your teaching staff. (For example, a curriculum may not have good Bible commentary, but your teachers have access to a strong commentary in

your church library. You can compromise on that value being present in the curriculum, **if** the teachers will make use of the library resources.)

From this ordered list, make a grid. List the values along one side. You will add the names of the curricula across the top.

- 4. Explore your existing curriculum.** Study the programs you are already using. What features do you want to keep? What topics are being covered effectively?

If you are replacing the current curriculum, what features should be changed? What about the program should be maintained?

Know what you are looking for in a replacement. You might decide there are new reasons to keep the old curriculum!

- 5. Examine three or more curricula.** Obtain sample copies of the material. Ideally, you can compare lessons that are very similar. Look for a common Bible theme or Scripture passage at the same age level. Look at a minimum of three different options to avoid being forced into an either/or decision-making process. You should also have samples of different age levels if this is a graded curriculum, so you can determine if the quality is consistent for every class.

How do you obtain sample copies? Most publishers make sample copies available for this purpose. Others have samples online. Your local Christian bookstore can often help you, even providing space for your meetings. You can borrow used curriculum from other churches, as well.

After you have chosen your samples, list the titles across the top of your grid. For every curriculum, you will look for evidence of each of the valued characteristics.

If curriculum A has excellent evidence of activities that encourage building relationships, find that box and write in the word "excellent." If curriculum B has confusing theological messages, find that box and write in the words, "poor or none." If curriculum C has teacher instructions that are not spectacular, but would give your teachers sufficient information, find that box and write the word "adequate" or "OK."

You will see a pattern that helps you make a final decision. You will see where you may be accepting a lower quality in one area so you gain the benefit of another value. Since you have ranked the values in order of importance, the top half of your grid will be the most important, and the bottom half will help you see what is less significant. (See Resource 14-1.)

NOTE: This is not a one-meeting job. You may need to take a lot of time to read through the lessons. Use several sessions to decide how your values are being addressed. This is quite different from the strategy of curriculum adoption that relies on a pretty cover and a couple of fun activities!

- 6. Extend the invitation.** Invite the teachers to examine the curriculum you have selected, and train them to use it properly. The best curriculum in the world is only as effective as the teachers who use it. Let your teachers know why the curriculum is the best for your church, how to use the features of the curriculum effectively, and how you are supporting them to manage the features that may need additional work.

Evaluating the Children's Ministry Program

You cannot evaluate the overall children's ministry without first establishing goals. There are two criteria that are foundational to all the other goals:

- The needs of the children within your ministry
- God's vision for your ministry

The ultimate goal of Christian Education is to lead individuals to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and lead them into a life of service to God and people through the help of the Holy Spirit. All other goals will ultimately lead to this goal.

Spiritual Goals

- Transformation—Provide opportunities for children to experience God in such a way that it will change their lives.
- Christlike Character—Provide opportunities for children to glorify God and reflect the nature and character of Jesus Christ.
- Community—Provide opportunities for children to work together in the Body of Christ to accomplish God's purposes and serve each other in love.

Ministry Goals

- A Bible-based, Christ-centered, learner-focused curriculum that allows the children to participate in the learning process and provides opportunities for application in and participation with the home
- Age-appropriate presentation of the plan of salvation
- A balance of worship, instruction, fellowship, and opportunities to lead and serve
- Program coordination with a plan from nursery to sixth grade that ensures coverage of the Old Testament and New Testament themes and using different learning styles and methods of instruction appropriate for each age level
- Understanding by parents, staff, volunteers, and children of the policies and procedures within children's ministries and a sense of cooperation as they partner together for children's growth
- Familiarity with the Bible and how it enriches our lives
- Opportunities to reach out to the community
- Purposeful and intentional discipleship

Physical Environment Goals

It may seem beyond a children's pastor's domain to worry about, or even offer suggestions about, facility changes. However, classes and meeting places for children are usually under the supervision and suggestion of the children's pastor. Here are some aspects of the facility that need to be considered in establishing the most effective environment for children and workers.

- Adequate floor space that reflects the needs according to the age of the children.³⁷ Furnishings such as tables and chairs that are appropriate in size and number for the space of the room and age of the children.
- Room temperatures not too hot or too cold

- Toilet facilities nearby and small enough for children to be able to use
- Adequate lighting
- Appropriate technology
- Gathering rooms that are safe, clean, welcoming, and stimulating

Personnel Goals

One of the most significant aspects of leading children's ministry is to help the adults who nurture children. It is challenging to recruit, train, motivate, monitor, and retain volunteers and staff. Here are some suggested personnel goals:

- A plan to obtain long-term commitments in order to build effective relationships between the teachers and students. Workers shouldn't feel that they have committed to a life-long sentence but you need to have some commitment that you and the worker agree to—1, 2, or 3 years.
- Continual training and opportunities to grow personally in Christ
- Required attendance at certain basic training classes
- Opportunities for teachers' personal spiritual growth
- Recruitment of enough adults to provide the necessary supervision and teaching of the children
- A qualified team to plan, supervise, and evaluate the Children's Ministries
- Clearly-written job descriptions
- Ongoing efforts to recruit volunteers

Church Community and Family Goals

- Children develop meaningful relationships with peers and adults in the church community.
- Children know and are known by church leadership.
- Children's needs play a vital role in church decision-making.
- Children are seen as integral contributors to the church mission and vision.
- Parents receive support and ongoing training in accomplishing the difficult tasks of Christian parenting.
- The schedule of church events compliments and does not complicate family life.
- Ministry at the church encourages parents to participate meaningfully in children's ongoing spiritual nurture.
- Communication is adequate and healthy.

The Evaluation

These goals provide the direction for evaluation. The purpose of evaluation is to identify areas of strength and areas for growth. Sometimes we become blind to our own strengths and weaknesses. It is helpful to get input from others. A strong useful evaluation requires input from multiple sources: your own perceptions, your volunteer staff, your senior pastor, parents, and children. If you are using this evaluation as an opportunity to pare down or add more activities, you will have to connect the actual activities you offer to your goals.

It would be most beneficial to you and the program if you appoint a board to oversee the evaluation. This relieves you from having to be thinking about this while you try to operate the day-to-day ministry. This board should understand your goals, children, and the mission of the church.

Your evaluators will want to review the program, answering questions, such as:

- Is the program meeting established goals?
- If so which goals are being met?
- Are some of the objectives being overlooked in favor of other outcomes? Why?
- What are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the ministry?
- Are there better strategies that could be used to be more effective in reaching ministry goals?

Ask different individuals to evaluate different sections of your goals. For example, ask parents to evaluate the areas of church community and family goals. Also, list all the programs and events you have offered in the last year, and ask parents to rank order them as to their impact on their children's lives and growth. List the parent activities you have conducted, and ask parents to evaluate which were most helpful to them.

Ask volunteers to evaluate the ministry goals and recruiting goals. List all the training and spiritual development opportunities you have offered. Ask volunteers to rank order them in terms of their usefulness.

When all the evaluations have been gathered, compare your personal evaluation to the data you collected. Discuss this information with the board who gathered the evaluations and your pastoral overseer. You may think this is too time-consuming, difficult, and not really needed, especially if people seem pleased with how things are going and you are getting a lot of complements. However, not only will annual evaluations help you keep the ministry effective and on track, but they will help guard you against excessive criticism if it arises. You will know that your decisions have been based on solid goals and consistent evaluations conducted by a board of overseers.

Lesson 14: Evaluating Curriculum, Events, and Programs

Due This Lesson

2-page paper
Visit at another church
Reading Resource 13-3
Reading Resource 13-4
Reading *Didache*
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- understand how to choose curriculum
 - understand how to evaluate your events
 - understand how to evaluate your overall children's ministry program

Homework Assignments

Evaluate a leader's guide from your church's curriculum. It can be a current one or even one from the past. Write a two-page paper of your evaluation of the curriculum. Use the same process discussed in class. Explain the strengths and weaknesses. Tell if you would adopt the curriculum, and explain why.

Read Resource 14-5.

Read Resource 14-6.

Read Resource 14-7.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section about your perspective on the use of evaluation as it relates to curriculum, events, and the overall effectiveness of your ministry.

Sample Curriculum Selection Grid

	Curriculum A	Curriculum B	Curriculum C
Scripturally/ Theologically Sound	excellent	poor	adequate
Relational	excellent	poor	excellent
Active	poor	excellent	adequate
Meaningful Discussion	excellent	adequate	poor
Good Music	adequate	poor	excellent
Evidence of Multi- style Instruction	adequate	excellent	excellent
Easy Preparation?	adequate	adequate	poor
Character Development	adequate	excellent	adequate
Compatible with Existing Programs	excellent	excellent	adequate
Strong Resources	adequate	poor	excellent
Sound Background Information	excellent	adequate	poor
Directions/ Questions Clear	adequate	excellent	adequate

Small Groups

Refer to Resource 14-1, use the information in the grid to decide which curriculum you would choose and why. What are the “deal makers” or “deal breakers” for you? Are there any other factors that might sway you if you were actually looking at the curricula represented on the grid?

Look at the other materials that you brought to class. Consider appearance, graphic layout, writing style, and other distracters that may make a curriculum appear more or less substantial than it really is. Discuss how important those features are.

Evaluating Event Effectiveness

- The first secret to helpful evaluation is to match your purposes to your observations.
- The second secret is to keep it simple.

An acronym that might be helpful in establishing goals and evaluating if the goals were appropriate and met is SMAC:

S—Are the goals specific?

M—Are the goals measurable?

A—Are the goals achievable?

C—Are the goals compatible with the overall purpose of the Children’s Ministry program?

An example of the SMAC plan in action:

- Our mission is to help children know, love, and serve Jesus.
- The purpose of this event is to introduce children to the concept of salvation, give them an opportunity to respond to a salvation invitation, and provide an opportunity for each child to share with an adult what took place in his or her heart and life.
- The Goals are:
 1. Have 60 children present to hear the message of the Gospel.
 2. Have a specific time of salvation invitation and prayer following the message.
 3. Have adults available to pray with those children who respond.
 4. Have each child share with an adult what he or she experienced during and after the message (small group with adult leader).
 5. Send a follow-up note in the mail or by email to new believers, welcoming them to the family of God and inviting them to a follow-up Bible study.
 6. Have at least three children participate in our new believer’s class.

Evaluation: Before, During, and After Event

EVENT NAME _____ DATE _____

Mark an X on the line to show your observations.

1. Promotion: Was it effective, well-done, and adequate to get results?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

2. Staff recruiting: Did we have enough staff in time for adequate training?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

3. Budget: Did we stay in budget?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

4. Did we budget adequate resources?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

5. Program: Did we stick to our purposes?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

6. Did we begin and end on time?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

7. Did we offer quality throughout the experience?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

8. Crisis Management: Did we deal effectively with any problems that arose?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

9. Finishing well: Did we work together to close the event?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

10. Did we follow up with guests and others?
Super! _____ *Needs Work*

11. What good things came from this event?

12. What needs follow-up efforts? (Discipline issues? repairs? replacements?)

13. What comments have you heard from participants and others?

14. Should we do this event again? Why or why not? Was it a worthwhile investment of time and energy?

15. Are there any suggestions or ideas if we do this again?

Understanding How Creativity, Play and Story Influences Spiritual Formation

The first attribute of God, introduced in the Bible, is His creativity: "In the beginning, God CREATED the heavens and the earth." Soon thereafter, we learn that God created us (humankind) in His own image.

"So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27, NLT).

In this passage, we learn that we are both CREATED by God and CREATIVE (in His image).

From the moment a child is born (and perhaps even before), he or she begins to create. Let's stretch our imaginations a little and think about what a newborn infant is creating.

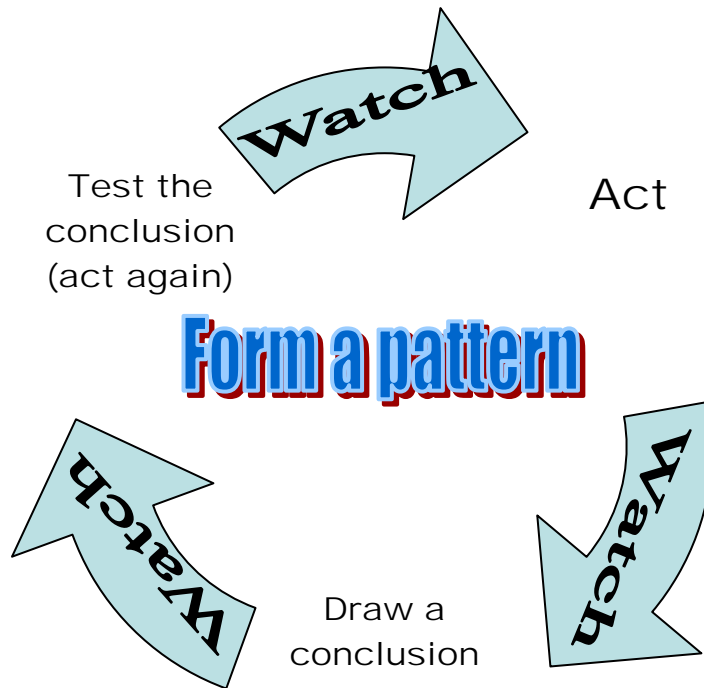
Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl in their book *The Scientist in the Crib*³⁸ point out newborns are creating bonds with their caretakers. They are creating patterns for recognizing faces, patterns for interpreting their surroundings, and patterns for interpreting their own body signals. According to these observers, children are making (creating) meaning from their first moments out of the womb.

Making meaning will be the most important part of their learning in the first few years, and making meaning will continue to be a lifelong task.

The two main ways these infant scientists engage in the process of meaning-making are observing and interacting. These are the root of all learning. We observe, interact with, and then form tentative conclusions based on big categories. These big categories might be "pain or pleasure" for the youngest child, moving toward more and more complex thinking as the child grows.

All our lives we organize ourselves by creating categories and classifications to understand better how the world works. We continually create opportunities to test and improve our understanding. Eventually, we use our understanding to express ourselves.

A picture of the process might look like this:



The primary way children form and test patterns and categories is through play. Play, for children, is full of meaningful exploration. Consider one of the earliest forms of play: making sounds. Make some of those sounds right now. Make “baby sounds” by making them yourself. As you explore, pay attention to how it feels to your mouth.

Babies make these sounds because they CAN and it feels good. When these sounds bring a response from a face they know, they make these sounds to form a social connection. Eventually, over hundreds of times through the process, babies wordlessly conclude, “If I make sounds, Mommy makes sounds back to me.” This conclusion, learned through play, becomes the foundation for learning language. Soon babies discover particular sounds bring particular responses. A similar play process leads to the conclusions, “If I push it, it will move.” “If I drop it, it will fall.” “If I dump them, they will scatter.”

As children get older, the processes become more complex. “If I stack blocks on top of each other, they stay. If I stack them too tall, they fall.” “If I push on the tape, it sticks. If it gets stuck on my fingers, it won’t stick to the paper.” “If I make the same words as Mommy, we sing together and have fun.”

As we develop language, we realize it is not necessary to act directly in order to form our conclusions. We can watch others or HEAR their stories. We can see their pictures, and they become our pictures. We can feel their emotion, and it becomes our emotion. In fact, the older we are, the more we rely on stories over play. For example, most of us know about skydiving because we have watched it and imagined it, not because we have donned our own parachutes. We COULD jump from an airplane. We could play out the action ourselves. But instead, we rely on representations of the action to gain our knowledge. We know it’s exciting because our hearts thump when

we watch the pictures or hear the accounts of the skydivers. We become story processors more than play processors. The stories become our way of knowing the real thing.

Play and experience will always be part of our lives, but we learn to rely more and more on language and images to help us understand reality. According to some skydivers, sometimes the stories we embrace are even more engaging than the real act! Through the stories of skydiving, we become confident that we “know” skydiving. We would recognize it anytime we saw it. Stories become for us a way of knowing what we choose not to physically experience.

Stories are also a way of knowing things that we are physically unable to experience. We cannot physically experience the Garden of Eden, for example. But we know it through the story of our faith. We know it by description. We know it by the events that occurred there. We know it by its place in relation to the rest of human history. We know it by comparison to the garden in our yard or the local park. For us, the Garden of Eden is real, even though we have never been there, and we cannot find it on a world map. Not only do we “know about” the Garden of Eden, we trust it. We have a relationship to it. The story about the Garden of Eden helps us make sense out of the rest of our lives. It is a pattern for understanding our own experience.

When I say “Garden of Eden,” I know you are thinking some of the same things I am thinking, because the story is one we share. Different people told us the story, but they told us the same story. There may have been differences in the details, but the story was basically the same. God created a perfect home for Adam and Eve. God gave them one rule. Adam and Eve lived there very happily until the serpent tempted them to sin. They disobeyed God’s rule. God punished them by sending them from the Garden, and they never had such a perfect home again.

The main characters of the story are God, Adam, Eve, and the serpent. The setting is “perfect.” The conflict is whether Adam and Eve would obey God or follow the serpent’s suggestion. The end of the story is the loss of the garden, the loss of “perfect.” But it is not only the details of the story we share. It is the consequences. We do not have a perfect homeland, and the story of the Garden of Eden helps us understand why. The story happened to Adam and Eve, but it also happened to us.

Sidebar: In our attempt to be accurate about the Bible as discussed previously we need to be clear in our presentation of this story to children. The Bible says that “The *serpent* was more crafty than any of the wild animals that the LORD God had made” (Gen 3:1). No where in the book of Genesis, in the Hebrew language, does the word/concept of “Satan” appear.

Good stories do not just happen—they happen to us. They become part of our experience. They shape our understanding of our lives. The world is filled with wonderful stories.

Try to identify the sources of the stories the poem describes:

Sea monsters, dragons, magicians, and spies!
Riddles and mystery! Intrigue and surprise!
Heroes and villains and giants and midgets,
Palaces, dungeons, and madmen and witches!

Kings, queens and emperors, wise men and fools;
Miracles, plagues, hidden treasure and jewels!

Angels and demons, rebellion and war,
Deception, disaster and mayhem and gore!
(Ew . . . yuck . . .)

Time travel! Romance! Adventure! Betrayal!
Freedom from slavery! Escaping from jail!
Soldiers and warriors and healers and saints,
And poems of thanksgiving, praise, and complaints!

Partying prophets and killers who preach,
Fish who eat people! Donkeys that teach!
Shipwrecks and journeys and blessings to give!
And the world's greatest SUPERHERO ever to live!
by Steven James³⁹

The source, of course, is the Bible. While there are other sources for stories about such creatures as sea monsters, kings, and angels, the Bible is full of action and characters that grab our imaginations and invite us into the greatest story ever told. About 52% of the Bible is narrative and 48% is law, poetry, wisdom literature, and letters. All Scripture is God-breathed, alive, and useful, but there is something about stories that engages us in deep ways. Several quotes may help us understand this concept better:

"When stories nestle in the body, soul comes forth." —Deena Metzger

"Stories set the inner life into motion." —Clarissa Pinkola Estes

Stories from the Bible are not the only ones that help us think about God. Stories of God's ongoing work in the hearts and lives of believers are very important ones to share. They are the true stories of modern-day saints.

Stories from outside the Bible may help to illustrate the truths the Bible teaches and build skills in exercising imagination. However, let's be very clear about the role of the church in the spiritual formation of children. We teach the foundational story of faith that we believe to be from the most credible source: the truth of God revealed through Scripture and shared with believers throughout history. Our primary content for education in the church is the shared stories of our faith in the Bible so we take part in a common history. We remember what God has done in preparation for what God is doing. These are the stories that tie us to God's people in the past, present and future.

These stories of the Bible help us know God in context so we can recognize God everywhere, much as the stories of skydiving help us recognize a skydiver when we see one.

And the stories help us to create patterns for responding to God wherever we see Him. I know I want to obey God at least in part because I have learned from Adam and Eve what it is like when we disobey God! Their story teaches me, in very simple language, bad things happen when people disobey God. And the story will capture the imagination of the children we teach and help them to learn that same lesson.

Refer to the diagram presented earlier. Undoubtedly, the children we teach will **watch** (or listen to) the story, **interact** with that story (sin themselves), **watch** what happens, **form a conclusion** and **test it** again and again until the message of the story (bad things happen when we disobey God) becomes real for them.

Fortunately, children interact with stories in many other ways. In fact, their first interactions with stories are often interactions that help them commit the stories to memory—an imaginary link between play and story that is deeply formative.

Gretchen Pritchard says it this way, “Our children deserve the opportunity to respond to this story, with clay, paint, and crayons, with their bodies and their voices, with their imaginations and their hearts, in worship, in sacrament, in celebration, and in play.”⁴⁰

This process is all part of the *praeparatio evangelica* or “preparation for the gospel.” The Bible stories learned at church are joined by other stories, events, and experiences in children’s daily experience that lead toward relationship with the great God of the Bible, who loves, cares, forgives, protects, directs, and saves.

This requires an attitude of openness toward children’s play, creative process, and imagination that is sometimes in conflict with our models for a well-run classroom.

One of the church’s primary responsibilities is to assist parents in their spiritual formation. When children experience someone loving them who also loves God and lives a Christlike life, it is a powerful model for lifetime commitment. The most effective way for children to begin to know and understand the truths recorded in the Bible is to live with adults whose lives express these truths. In this way children catch the spirit of Christ long before they can read.

The tasks of the church in supporting parents:

- Nurture personal attentiveness to God
- Encourage spiritual community through small groups
- Empower and encourage spiritual life in families
- Provide the resources and opportunities to mature as a spiritual leader
- Connect the parents to the world through networks of prayer and ministry

A Dozen Tips for Storytellers

1. Only ask close-ended questions during the story (in places children can join the telling with a YES! NO! or one-word answer.) Follow the story with open-ended questions that encourage imagination and interpretation. ("Why do you think God chose a big fish to swallow Jonah?")
2. When there's dialogue in the story, don't look at the audience. Look at the place where the other character would be standing or look up to dialogue with God.
3. Choose a simple prop instead of pictures to go with your story. Pass it around and let children experience it.
4. If you are asking the children to participate in the story in some way,
 - Teach them the appropriate response, the cue you'll give, and a cue to stop.
 - Give the clue and let them practice the appropriate responses before the story.
 - Have the children stop and wait for the cue to respond during the story.Appropriate participatory actions include:
 - Make a gesture or sound for a particular word in the story. For instance, each time you say "ark" the children will respond with hammering their fists three times into their open palms
 - Teach a refrain. For the Creation story, you say, "God looked around and said . . ." The children respond, "Hey! This is GOOD!"
5. Use creative dramatics or pantomime. Pause at each verb and encourage listeners to act out the motion in their own way.
6. Don't be afraid to introduce humor or "modern day equivalents" to older groups of children. But avoid jokes that go beyond any child's age understanding or experiences; or confusing sidetracks.
7. Enlist assistance. Have the children hold props, read shorts parts, or be a silent character.
8. Tie God's story to your story. If you are telling the story of David and Goliath, bring a rock from your backyard. Say, "I was getting ready for Sunday School this week, and I decided to take a walk in my yard. I bent down to search for something, just like I imagine David must have searched. I found grass, and sticks, and an old gum wrapper. And then I found this perfect little rock. And I began to wonder. Was this rock bigger than David's rock? Smaller? Flatter? Does it have sharper edges? What made his rock just right to be used by God in the hand of a boy?"

9. Manage the atmosphere. If the children get too rowdy, work with their energy.
 - Slow the pace. Make larger, exaggerated gestures and slow-motion to a freeze (preferably in a strange posture).
 - Reduce your volume to a whisper.
 - Increase your volume with a one word interjection, such as "AND" or "BUT". Then make a dramatic pause.
 - Redirect the children's attention to discover the action. "Let's find out what happens!"
 - Give the children a quick task: "Clap three times and sit on your hands."
 - Slip into a falsetto or monotone robot voice and repeat, "Must have silence." Don't overdo this. Five times is enough to over-communicate your message.
 - Start on one side of the room with a shush or other silence signal and move steadily and intentionally across the audience before immediately reengaging loudly and energetically with the story
 - Acknowledge that the children are having fun. Then politely request that they engage in the story. "OK, I know this is fun, but I want to tell you the rest of the story."
 - If nothing works, stop the story completely. Pleasantly say, "Stories can't be told without listeners." Redirect the children to another activity.

10. Let the story be yours.
 - Care about the story, know it well, and creatively imagine the details.
 - Create your own words to tell the story. Curriculum offers a suggested way to tell the story.
 - Consider the particular audience. You are more obligated to interact with the listeners than to maintain a scripted approach.
 - Give up self-consciousness, and let your inner actor out.

11. Considering giving the children guidelines of what to listen for. Give an introduction that poses a problem or sets the stage for interest. "I'm going to tell you a story. I want you to be listening for the character in the story who is most like you." or "I want you to pay careful attention to what happens first, middle, and last." or "I want you to decide which character makes the best choice." All of these gear children to listen for particular kinds of details and help keep them from wandering away in day-dreams.

12. Keep moving, but not too quickly. There's a brain function principle at work here. If you pace too much, they can't get focused. Stand in one place too long, and they become bored. Using the space you have carefully allows children to redirect their focus periodically (important for short attention spans), and it encourages the children to use different parts of their brains as they engage with the story.

Appropriate Biblical Interpretation

Let's talk about truth and how we are charged to be responsible for it. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).

There are several categories of truth we should be aware of:

1. **Absolute truth:** Truth that always was and always will be.

Examples:

- God is love.
- God created the universe.
- Jesus is the one and only son of God.
- Jesus will come again.

2. **Tentative truth:** Truth based on shared information, but it could change with new information

Examples:

- For centuries it was believed that the earth was the center of the universe.
- It was once believed that aspirin was harmless. Under most circumstances this is true, but further research has demonstrated that it can cause bleeding complications.

3. **Contextual truth:** Truth that is true because of the circumstances, but it cannot be generalized to all circumstances.

Examples:

- You say, "Don't go into the street because there is a car coming." The next day you ask the child to cross the street to go to the car. He responds, "I can't. You said not to go into the street."
- Slacks are acceptable attire for women in your church but in a Buddhist Temple in Bangkok women are required to wear a dress.

4. **Personal truth:** Truth that is a matter of preference or personal circumstance. Some call this "relative truth."

Examples:

- "My wife is the most beautiful woman in the world."
- "Chicago is the best place to live."

It is important to recognize the existence of each of these kinds of truths and it does not undermine the existence of the other kinds of truth. The problem is when we take one kind of truth and teach it as though it were another. Christians have been guilty historically of trying to teach truths that are personal, contextual, or tentative as though they were absolute. Or Christians have taken part of a truth and taught it as an absolute without considering the "rest of the verse." Non-Christians have been guilty historically of trying to teach absolute truth as though it was NOT absolute. Both approaches cause problems with faith.

When truth is not handled correctly, as the Bible charges us to do, we create problems. We can not change the way non-Christians handle truth, but we can be responsible for our own integrity. We must be aware that, particularly with children,

when we teach something that is not an absolute truth as though it were, we can unintentionally set up those children for faith crises later in life. These crises often surround the controversial issues within the universal Church, issues that are not critical to our salvation unless we allow them to distract us.

In the Church of the Nazarene, we recognize some of these theological differences without taking a position. We as individual believers may have an opinion, but we recognize other believers have Scriptural bases to support their perspectives, too.

How should a children's pastor avoid teaching children false concepts about God through misrepresentation of Scripture?

Seven steps to better biblical interpretation:

1. Select a good Study Bible. There are two kinds of translations available and paraphrases: Word Literal, Dynamic Equivalent, and Free Paraphrase.
 - The Word Literal is the closest to the original as possible. The problem with this translation is that it is more difficult to read because it does not always flow easily. Sometimes the meaning or message is sacrificed for the sake of the literal words. Examples are NRSV (New Revised Standard Version), NASB (New American Standard Bible), and RSV (Revised Standard Version).
 - The Dynamic Equivalent is easier to read but sacrifices some accuracy of words in order to convey a more accurate message. Examples are NIV (New International Version), TEV (Today's English Version), CEV (Contemporary English Version), and NLT (New Living Translation).
 - The Free Paraphrase should be used only for devotional reading or introductory reading. Examples are The Message, The Living Bible, or JB Phillips Paraphrase.

You may want to read from all three of these in order to get a broad range of meaning. Find a study Bible that has notes on the text, introductions to each book, and general articles or major sections that help to clarify the scripture. However, you need to be aware of the theological position of the publishing company and/or the writers that contributed to the commentary. The *Reflecting God Study Bible* (NIV) was produced by Wesleyan scholars.

2. Locate, limit, and then listen to the text. After you have located a biblical passage or story to study, read what is written before the passage you are reading. This may set the stage for the story or passage you are preparing to read. Look for a complete thought or unit. You can look for indicators to see if a new thought is being established. A new thought might start with phrases like: "Therefore," "After these things," "Now," or "Finally." Usually the end of a thought will be obvious. Once you've located the thought unit, read it over and over, listening for what it says. The Bible was primarily written to be read aloud and listened to.
3. Ask the historical questions of the text.
 - The first question to ask is: Where do I find this text historically?
 - Who is the author?
 - What is the time and place of the writing? You need to consult maps and know the relationship of one place to another and the distance between. What other events took place at the location mentioned?
 - Who is the audience?
 - If groups/tribes of people are mentioned, who are they? What is the relationship to the children of Israel?

- If a specific person is mentioned, who is that person?
- What is the purpose for which it was written?
- Are there any events occurring at the time of the writing that might have an effect on what is being written?
- The second question is: Is the history within the text the same as the history of the text? For example, if the psalmist is writing about the Exodus event, the history within the text is concerning the events surrounding the time period of the Exodus, not the time of the psalmist.

4. Ask the literary questions of the text. Ask the question: What is the literary form of this text? Is it narrative, a historical review, a poem, a hymn, a parable, a dramatic illustration, a letter or a specific portion of a letter, or a wise saying? Sometimes this requires consulting a commentary or other source.

Identifying the literary form can lead to a broader understanding of the life situation typically addressed by this kind of writing. For example, a wisdom saying is a general truth about life and not a law.

What group does the book belong to? The arrangement of the Bible is by groups that identify its purpose.

- Law-Torah—the most revered section of Scripture for the Jews, this is the foundation that identifies who the children of Israel are and why they exist
- History—record of events, people, and God’s interaction and relationship with his people
- Wisdom Literature—worship, praise, celebration of God (mostly in poetry)
- Prophets—God’s evaluation, course of correction, and consequences for disobedience
- Gospels—events and teachings of Jesus’ life on earth
- Epistles—letters written to people and churches giving teaching and instruction

The literary devices used in a passage can be helpful to your understanding as well. Parallelism, repetition, word play, puns, hyperbole, metaphor, simile, irony, and rhetoric are all used by biblical authors. It would be a mistake to make what was intended to be a pun into a rule for holy living!

5. Identify and study key terms and concepts. Use different readings of the text to make clear what the key terms, themes, and concepts are. Do research to understand how the author is using those words and ideas. Use a concordance and Bible dictionary to clarify these ideas. If the key characters in a passage are the Assyrians, find out who the Assyrians were and what they were like.
6. Discover the major theological affirmation of the text. At this point, you should have a pretty clear perspective of the primary theological emphasis of the passage.

Ask:

What did the writer intend when this text was written?

What is being said about . . .

- God?
- People?
- Evil?
- Salvation?
- The community of believers?

In essence what is the theological thrust of the passage? Try to summarize it in one sentence.

Then ask:

- How does this relate to the larger theological understanding of the biblical book where we find the text?
- How does this relate to what I find in other biblical books, both Old Testament and New Testament?

7. Apply the text to contemporary life. What does this passage teach about God, myself, my relationship to God, and my way of living in the world? Even more importantly, what does it say to the children I am ministering to?

Ask:

- How did this text function when it was first heard?
- How does this text function today?
- What are the human needs being addressed in this passage?
- What should I do in response to what I am hearing in this text?

It may seem really time consuming to think of going through this process for every lesson. However, once you have done it for a chapter you will not need to go through the whole process again. Also, commentaries and Biblical resources can speed the process. A well-developed teacher's guide for your curriculum will have much of this work completed for you.

The point is pastors and teachers have a great responsibility to handle the Bible correctly. They must not risk teaching children concepts that are not completely accurate and have the potential of misleading their thinking in the future.

Lesson 15: Storytelling, Spiritual Formation, and Biblical Interpretation

Due This Lesson

2-page paper
Reading Resource 14-5
Reading Resource 14-6
Reading Resource 14-7
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- understand how creativity can encourage spiritual formation
 - develop creative methods for storytelling
 - practice maintaining exegetical integrity in the teaching process

Homework Assignments

Observe and listen to as many lessons/stories presented to children as possible. Write a two-page paper on your observations. How accurate was the information? How engaged were the children? Were they allowed to interact or add to the lesson? What do you think the children gained from the lesson or story? Will they remember it?

Read Resource 15-4.

Read Resource 15-5.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section on either your current practices with children in relation to their spiritual formation or your plans in the future.

Nurturing Spiritual Formation

General tools for attitudes and practices that nurture spiritual formation in children:

Respect children's spiritual sensitivity.

- Listen to children's perceptions of God and the world around them. Listen. Look. Listen some more.
- Honor children's special position as defined by Jesus.
- Provide opportunities for children to minister to each other and to the church
- Give children opportunities to be wrong and discover right through sensitive questioning rather than lecturing.
- Trust that God is at work in them.

Give children time and space.

- Provide for quiet times as well as activity.
- Help the children experience the awe of "sacred places" and times, such as the altar and communion, and beautiful objects that reflect the glory of God.
- Encourage "sanctified imagination" experiences, imagining how God might act or feel based on shared stories or experiences. Only "correct" these impressions if they explicitly violate what we know about the nature of God through Scripture.
- Help children be aware of clouds, stars, animals, and other expressions of God's creativity.
- Provide times to choose how to respond to God as well as structured activities.
- Wonder aloud together about the work of God without giving answers.
- Look for beauty and creative human expression as gifts from God.

Model hearing the voice of God.

- Pray together in a natural way and share answers to prayer
- Talk about how you are experiencing God and how God is changing you.
- Share the Bible verses and devotional thoughts with others.
- Recall your own childhood and try to stay in touch with what some people call "the inner child"—that part of you that experiences wonder, play, and moments of hurt and joy in a vulnerable way.

Seven Ways to Help You Remember Your Stories

Storyteller Steven James offers these ideas to help you remember your stories.⁴¹

1. **Walk It.** Move around as you practice the story. Your gestures, posture, and facial expressions will help you remember the story.
2. **Watch It.** Many people remember images better than words. They find they can remember stories easily if they watch them in their minds like watching a movie. When telling the story, they simply explain what they see in their imagination.
3. **Draw It.** Think of the story as a progression of three or four different scenes. Then, draw a picture of each scene on a sheet of paper. As you tell the story, picture the scenes in your head.
4. **Tour It.** Some people find they can more easily picture a story by pretending to walk through a house, watching each scene of the story happen in a different room.
5. **Chunk It.** If you remember words better than images, try learning the story a few lines at a time. You can learn each “chunk” of text if you write the story in four to seven chunks.
6. **Question It.** Instead of worrying about remembering the exact images, pictures, or words, retell the story in your own way. If you cannot remember what comes next, ask yourself, “What would naturally come next?” Then, double-check in your Bible to see if you forgot any important sections. Practice again. Each time you practice, you’ll remember more and more details.
7. **Explain It.** We remember better what we understand. Make sure you really know what is happening in your story. Tell someone *about* it. Explain what happens and why. Don’t worry about actually telling the story, just talk about it. After a few times through, you’ll feel more comfortable with the story.

Story Structure Checklist

- Who is this story about?
- What lesson is being taught?
- What names do I need to remember?
- What struggle or problem do the characters face?
- How is the problem solved?
- How does the story end?

Small Groups

You will need: Bible resources, study Bibles, and/or Internet access (www.biblegateway.com).

In your group look at your assigned passage: Ruth 1:1-14; 1 Samuel 7:2-6; Amos 2:6-16; John 4:1-15; Colossians 2:9-15

Work through the Seven Steps to Better Biblical Interpretation—Resource 14-7.

Responding to a Salvation Invitation

Key areas of Christian formation that are important in leading children to a point where they are likely to respond to a salvation invitation include:

Early Childhood

Babies experience God's love through the love of caregivers. They form a foundation of trust upon which faith may be built. They sense God's presence as caregivers practice the presence of Christ. They feel loved and secure in church. They become familiar with the words *God* and *Jesus*.

Toddlers and Twos know God made them and are aware of His love for them. They know the Bible is a special book that tells them about God and Jesus. They know Jesus, God's Son, is someone special who loves them. They know they are part of their church, a special place to learn about God. They enjoy the wonder of God's creation through their senses. They can express thanks and praise to God for His love and care.

Preschool children know God is great and good. They know Jesus is alive, and they love Jesus as their friend. They want to please God, and they talk to Him. They fall in love with Bible stories and enjoy Bible verses through a variety of experiences. They recognize they make choices. They can begin to participate in the activities of their church community.

Kindergarten children are likely to respond to a salvation invitation because they want to please God and those around them. They are not likely to understand what it means to be a sinner (although they do understand the idea of "naughty"). They do have a sense of what it means to be a Christian, and they want to be one. This reflects a sincere heart. At this age, it is not appropriate to ASK a child to accept salvation, but it is important to respond to a child who shows sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading. It is never appropriate to either hold a child back or force him or her forward.

Elementary Age

According to George Barna's 1999 research, 32% of American Christians are saved between the ages of 5 and 13. This identifies the elementary years as the time of prime receptivity. Some will accept salvation earlier, others later; but the elementary years are a window of opportunity.

While there are many messages and tools to explain salvation to children, the message needs to remain clear and uncluttered. This short list helps to simplify the steps of relationship with God before, during, and after salvation.

- You can trust God and what He says.
- God loves you, and He wants to be your best friend forever.
- Everyone sins. You have sinned.
- Sin separates a person from God.
- Jesus, God's own Son, lived, died, and rose again to take away our sins.
- God will forgive your sins when you ask Him.
- Jesus will help you know how to live for God and love others.

- As a Christian, you will belong to God’s family of believers.
- If you maintain your relationship with God, you will have life forever with God.

When a child responds to an invitation for salvation, you can walk him or her through the ABCs of Salvation. “My Best Friend, Jesus” is an illustrated booklet that provides visuals as you lead children through the ABCs of Salvation. It is available through the Nazarene Publishing House. A downloadable leader’s guide is available at www.WORDACTION.com/MBF .

A—Admit you have sinned. Tell God what you have done, be sorry for it, and be willing to quit. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

B—Believe God loves you and sent His Son, Jesus, to save you from your sins. Accept the forgiveness God offers you. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16, NLT).

C—Claim Jesus as your Savior. Acknowledge God’s forgiveness, respond with love, and follow Jesus. “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13).

Pray with the child, using this or a similar prayer:

Dear God, I admit I have disobeyed You, and I am sorry. Please forgive me. Thank You for sending Jesus to die on the Cross for the wrong things I have done. I want Jesus to be my Savior and best Friend. Help me to obey you every day. I believe you have forgiven me. Thank You.

As soon as children receive Jesus, you should visit with them to let them know how to build a relationship with God. Here are some key steps for children:

1. Learn more about God from the Bible.
2. Talk to God often.
 - Thank Him for sending Jesus.
 - Ask God to help them obey Him.
 - Tell Him about their needs and the needs of others.
3. Tell others about Jesus.
4. Go to church to meet with other Christians.
5. If they disobey God, ask for forgiveness right away. Keep on living as God’s child.

Here are some things NOT to do when leading a child to Christ:

- Do not bribe a child to accept Christ by offering rewards such as Bibles or other gifts.
- Do not shame a child by mentioning sins you know the child has committed. Wait for the Holy Spirit to bring these things to the child’s mind. Do not imply that this child “really needs to be saved.” Focus on the fact that all have sinned. This keeps a child from building defensive barriers against God’s ongoing work.
- Do not pressure a child with threats of punishment for sin.
- Do not overcomplicate the message of salvation with symbolic language. Many old songs and lessons use the words, “Ask Jesus into your heart.” For some children, this symbol creates confusion and hinders their acceptance of Christ. After children are saved, they can talk about what Jesus does to them (fills them with love, gives them the desire to serve Him, etc.) The term “new life” can be very confusing for a child who is suffering in life circumstances over which they have no control. When they still have the same parents, the same

home, and the same hunger and need, they may feel that God didn't save them since they didn't get the new life they imagined. Focus on describing a spiritual life that allows them to have strength to do the right thing when life is difficult and gives hope for a better future. We develop that hope in tangible ways when the body of Christ begins to connect with the physical needs of the child.

- Do not overcomplicate the message of salvation with theological details, such as "Jesus paid the price for your sins." (What does sin cost?) Do not focus on the death of Christ above His life and resurrection. While it may be helpful for adults to understand the purpose Jesus' death served in the context of God's covenant with humanity, it may frighten and confuse children in a way that hinders their ongoing relationship with God.
- Do not forget that in a Wesleyan understanding of salvation, God's love is the primary focus of drawing people to himself. While God's justice is incredibly important, the focus on God's love and belonging is most consistent with the developmental needs of the child.
- Do not discourage a child who has "already been saved." Instead, express your value for the child's sensitivity, help him or her to confess whatever specific sins he or she feels are causing a separation from God, and focus the prayer on trusting God for salvation. Remember that each response is an opportunity to deepen the child's commitment.
- Do not get caught up in your role in leading a child to Christ. Salvation is the work of God. While we may provide an environment and set goals for the number of children we would like to be saved in relation to a certain event or program, we should never see a child's commitment as a measure of our success. We establish an open climate while God does the work.

Teaching Children to Pray

Infants—Before children develop language skills, pray *for* them in their presence. Speak to God for both of you, using the word “we.” Focus on thanksgiving and adoration prayers. “We thank you God for arms and legs.” “We love you God. Thank you for loving us.” These prayers should be spontaneous and related to what’s happening. As you snuggle and read, thank God for the things pictured in the book.

Toddlers—Pray *with* them. As children begin to learn language, they love the sounds of rhyme and meter. Teach them recited prayers, and say these prayers with them, especially before meals and bedtime. Rather than being meaningless chatter, these memorized prayers are an important part of prayer development as toddlers develop habits of prayer.

Twos and Threes—Pray in response to them. As these children relate to you their hurts and problems, ask, “Would you like me to pray about that?” Then pray a short prayer that models bringing concerns to the God.

Fours and Fives—Pray in response to your suggestion. Ask a child to pray for one specific thing in a public setting. Open the prayer yourself. Tell the child when you would like him or her to pray about the specific thing. For example, “Katie, would you ask God to help us share our crayons today?” or “Justin, would you ask God to help your sick grandmother?”

Early Elementary—Encourage very brief silent prayer (early elementary). Leave time open in group settings for children to whisper their own prayers to God. This teaches several important principles. We can all pray at the same time. God hears even when we don’t talk out loud. We can pray to God on our own, even when no one else is listening. This is moving the child toward an independent prayer life, not mediated by teachers or parents.

Middle Elementary—Introduce prayer with each other. Children may begin to feel shy about praying out loud at this age. Introduce partner prayers where the children can tell each other about a prayer need and choose how to pray about it together. Some children are ready to lead the whole group in prayer by this age. This is moving them toward seeing the power of “two or more, gathered in My name.”

Preteen—Encourage an active, private prayer life. Introduce the concept of a prayer journal and habit-building tools to connect prayer and Bible study in a personal devotional setting. Many children of this age enjoy keeping charts to remind themselves to have devotions. They can be accountable to you as their spiritual leader and to peers in a small-group accountability structure. At this stage, children are ready to learn to be faithful in intercessory prayer and can tolerate long-range prayers that God is answering “not yet.” Preteens also enjoy prayer challenges, such as praying for a local rescue mission or for world hunger, even when they may not see direct results.

Lesson 16: Salvation of Children and Follow-up Activities

Due This Lesson

Observation paper
Reading Resource 15-4
Reading Resource 15-5
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- understand how to communicate the truth of the gospel with clarity and urgency in an age-appropriate way
 - consider several ways to follow up a child's conversion
 - develop strategies to teach a child to participate in prayer and Bible study

Homework Assignments

Develop a plan for your church for the parents and/or teachers to follow up a child's conversion.

Read Resource 16-7.

Read Resource 16-8.

Read Resource 16-9. Prepare a Children's Church lesson that you will present in class. Use whatever method or technique that you find helpful in presenting a lesson that will impact children. You may choose the age group and the lesson topic. You are not limited to the methods that are described in the resource.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Include your thoughts about leading a child to Christ. Really think through this in terms of your responsibility to God, to truth, and to developing a lifelong servant of Jesus Christ.

Resources

www.wordaction.com/go/BBSKIDS

So . . . You Want to Follow Jesus?

So . . . You want to Share Jesus?

So . . . You Want to Disciple Others?

www.wordaction.com

Discovering My Faith – Catechism Teaching Resource Packet.
The Young Believer's Discipleship Series

Children's Ministries Curriculum Age-Level Spiritual Goals

Babies—Birth to 12 months

- B1—Experience God's love through the love of caregivers
- B2—Form a foundation of trust upon which faith may be built
- B3—Sense God's presence as caregivers practice the presence of Christ
- B4—Feel loved and secure in church
- B5—Become familiar with the words "God" and "Jesus"
- B6—Hear Bible verses in various ways

Toddlers & Twos—12 months to 36 months

- T1—Know God made them and be aware of His love for them
- T2—Know that the Bible is a special book that tells them about God and Jesus
- T3—Know that Jesus, God's Son, is someone special who loves them
- T4—Know they are part of their church, a special place to learn about God
- T5—Enjoy the wonder of God's creation through their senses
- T6—Express thanks and praises to God for His love and care

Preschool—Three- and Four-year-olds

- P1—Know that God is great and good
- P2—Recognize that they make choices
- P3—Know that Jesus is alive
- P4—Want to please God
- P5—Love Jesus
- P6—Fall in love with Bible stories
- P7—Enjoy Bible verses through a variety of experiences
- P8—Talk with God
- P9—Begin to participate in the activities of their church community.

Kindergarten—Five- and six-year-olds not in first grade

- K1—Recognize that some choices are right and some are wrong
 - Learn to share possessions
 - Begin to be sorry for wrongdoing because it hurts God and others
 - Begin to understand the concept of forgiveness (Encourage the children to practice and to receive forgiveness.)
- K2—Know that God's love through Jesus is for all people, including them
- K3—Continue to build a relationship with God
 - Recognize that God is trustworthy
 - Realize that God hears and answers prayer
 - Want to do what is right according to God
 - Learn Bible verses that help them know and obey God
- K4—Begin to build relationships with others
 - Show respect for others
 - Want to help others
- K5—Understand that their Church is a family who loves God
- K6—Believe that Jesus is alive

Early Elementary—Grades 1-2

- EE1—Know what God is like through His interaction with Bible characters
- EE2—Grow in the understanding that they need to know Jesus as Savior and Lord
 - Want to follow Jesus, God’s Son
 - Confess sin and seek forgiveness when the Holy Spirit convicts them
- EE3—Become better acquainted with the Bible
 - Realize that the Bible helps us know and love God
 - Understand that the Bible is a guide for right living
 - Learn Bible stories and characters
 - Memorize Bible verses as an important means of their spiritual formation
 - Learn the basic Bible skills of locating Old and New Testaments, Genesis, Psalms, Gospels
- EE4—Develop a beginning understanding of what it means to trust and obey God
 - Begin to make choices based on Bible truths
 - Grow in the practice of prayer
- EE5—Begin to understand that the Church is God’s people who love and serve Him
- EE6—Know that Christians will have life forever with God
- EE7—Grow in concern for people who don’t know Jesus

Middle Elementary—Grades 3-4

- ME1—Develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be saved and to respond to God in faith
- ME2—Evidence a desire to strengthen their relationship with God by reading the Bible and praying on their own
 - Know how to read Bible verse references and find them in the Bible
 - Begin to develop a personal devotional life
 - Become familiar with and practice various types of prayer: adoration, thanksgiving, intercession, and confession
 - Memorize longer passages of Scripture, such as the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments
- ME3—Make choices in light of God’s character and Scripture
 - Begin to understand the consequences of their choices
 - Begin to rely on God for guidance and strength to make right choices
- ME4—Grow in understanding of what it means to be the Church—the people of God
 - Realize that if they are Christians, they are part of the Church
 - Practice spiritual accountability
 - Participate in the ministry of their church
- ME5—Know that Jesus will return someday for His Church, and they need to live so they are ready to be with Him

Preteen—Grades 5-6

- PT1—Develop and use Bible study skills to better understand the overall message of the Bible (concordance, Bible dictionary, commentary, and maps)
- PT2—Accept themselves as loved by God
- PT3—Acknowledge Jesus as Lord and pattern their lives after Him
 - Understand the concepts of spiritual growth, ministry, service, and outreach
 - Explore the nature of lifelong discipleship
- PT4—Begin to understand what it means to live a life of holiness
 - Become aware of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives
 - Begin to understand what spiritual gifts are

- Begin to experience the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to do God's will and live the Christian life

PT5—Begin to understand Jesus' role as their mediator in heaven

PT6—Begin to integrate their relationship with God with who they are and how they live

PT7—Begin to recognize the global nature of the Church at work

PT8—Rely on God to help them make a successful transition from the preteen years to the teen years.

Guidelines for Family Devotions

1. Be real. Work family devotions into time you are together already. You won't stick with it if it doesn't work with your schedule.
2. Longer isn't better. Keep it short, and keep the pace moving.
3. Make it touchy-feely for as long as you can. Associating snuggling with devotions is a special tool for drawing family members closer.
4. When you can't snuggle, bring in the other senses. Look for devotions based on activities that can be tasted, touched, smelled, heard, and seen.
5. Use media as a connection to the things of God. Kids watch TV. Watch with them. Give them opportunities to evaluate the behavior of characters in light of scriptural truths.
6. Get out of doors. Think about the things of God in nature. Think about God's miraculous designs for your body as you exercise together.
7. Create traditions around holidays.
 - Valentine's Day—Create a Valentine to God.
 - Lent—Give up electric light at mealtimes, and light candles instead.
 - Easter—Each day for a week, open a plastic egg that tells a part of the story of Jesus' death and resurrection story.
 - Christmas—Don't forget Jesus' birthday cake.
8. Allow kids to share what God is teaching them, what verses they have read privately, and what they learned from Sunday School. Let the children be responsible for the content from time to time.
9. Don't be too focused on structured time. If you do, you will miss opportunities in real life.
10. Focus more on questions than answers. Don't lecture your kids. Have conversations with them based on your own life experiences. For example, when your child gets a bad grade, say, "I was thinking about one time when I got a D on a test. I felt so bad, and I was really mad at myself. I wonder if anyone in the Bible ever felt like I did. I wonder if you ever felt like I did. How do we know what we should do when we blow it? Let's see if we can find out from Scripture." If you have a tough time finding an answer, search it out together. Make the search the devotional time. You can also interview the pastor or ask other people to share how they overcame failure.

Child-Friendly Prayer Motivators

Prayer M&Ms—Give each child a personal size bag of M&Ms™ or Skittles™ candies. Tell the kids not to eat them yet! For every red M&M, they should pray for a family member. For every green M&M pray for someone in our church. For every yellow one, thank God for something that happened this week. For every brown one pray for someone in the class. For every blue one, pray for something in this world that makes God sad. Variation: Thank God for something of that color for each candy you have in your bag before you eat it.

Five Fingers of Prayer—

1. Your thumb is nearest you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you—your family and friends. They are the easiest to remember.
2. The next is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.
3. Next is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. They need God's guidance.
4. The fourth is our ring finger. This is our weakest finger. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain.
5. And lastly comes our little finger; the smallest finger of all. Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs may seem smaller, but they are important!

Global Prayers—Spin a globe and stop it with one finger. Pray for people (or missionaries) wherever your finger lands.

Alphabet Praise—Beginning with the letter A, name something for which to praise God. Continue around the circle with each person naming something that begins with the next letter of the alphabet.

Prayer Phone—Using an old cell phone, encourage young children to talk to God about their day, what made them happy or sad, and what they are planning to do before they go to bed.

Graffiti Wall—Put a large piece of butcher paper out, along with some crayons or markers, and encourage children to draw or write their prayers.

Prayer Chain—Write each prayer on a strip of paper and join the strips together in a paper chain. This is an especially good activity when the group is praying for one person or about one thing together.

Hot Potato Prayer—Pass a potato from person to person while you play music. When the music stops, someone prays for the person holding the "hot potato."

Prayer Walk—As children come into class, give each one a piece of construction paper and a marker. For children who can write for themselves, have them write a prayer request on the paper. For those who can't, write the requests for them. Tape the papers to the floor in a random path, like a cake walk. When you are ready to pray, have the children walk the path from request to request. When the music stops, they are to pray for the request they land on.

Discovering the Bible

Strategy 1: Bible Detective

Bible organization—chapters and verses

Complete idea—sentences, paragraphs, and story/teaching

Solving a mystery

You could:

- ask someone with more experience
- use a dictionary or encyclopedia to find out more about words
- follow the “leads” the research turns up

Keep searching until you understand the mystery you have identified.

Strategy 2: Bible Archeologist

Questions—Who, What, When, Where

To discover this information:

- look in the introduction to the Bible book
- look for words in the text or title of the book that will help
- look at Bible maps
- place the event on a Bible timeline

Strategy 3: Heart and Soul

Use a highlighter to underline words that cause strong feelings—work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and soul

Strategy 4: Imagine the Outcomes

Imagine a real life situation that compares to a verse.

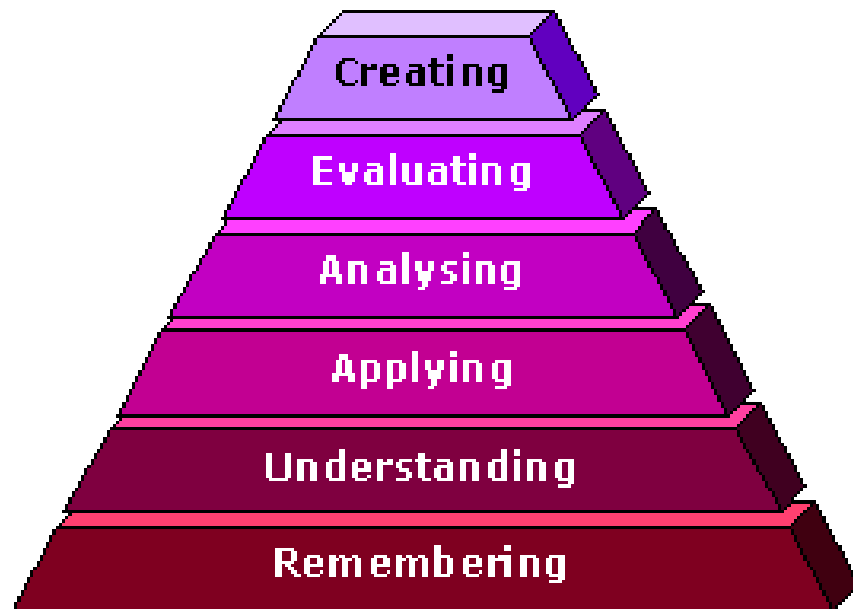
Imagine what something feels like.

Strategy 5: Follow the Questions

Come up with good questions to help children apply Scripture internally

- To assist children with the lowest level of learning, remembering, the teacher might ask: “How should a brother who is caught in a sin be restored?” The answer is, “Gently.”
- At the next level, we need to make sure that a child understands. A question might be, “What does gently mean?”
- Next, the child might be encouraged to apply the information through a question such as, “When is a time someone has treated you gently when you made a mistake?”
- An analyzing question might be framed as an example: “Jared discovered Alyssa taking a cookie from the tray after their mother asked them to wait until after dinner. Jared yelled, ‘Stop!’ at Alyssa and ran to tell his mom. Did Jared appropriately apply Galatians 6:1? How do you know?”
- An evaluating question might be: “What could Jared have done better to apply Galatians 6:1?”
- To move to the final step of creating, you might assign a task: “Create a short skit with a friend to show how you might live out Galatians 6:1.”

A Progression of Questions⁴²



Based on Bloom's Taxonomy

Some Mistakes in Teaching Bible Study to Children

1. Too much, too fast.
2. Memorizing words without exploring understanding.
3. Memorizing verses without putting them into the context of God's story.
4. Teaching stories without drawing out the life principles New Testament letters present so clearly.
5. Overestimating children's independent reading level.
6. Assuming that "One size fits all."
7. We fail to check for understanding.
8. We fail to help children understand that their ability to live up to God's standards will grow as they do.

Children's Worship

Just as there are many different styles and forms for adult worship, there are different models for conducting children's worship. Your children's church doesn't have to mimic the adult worship service, but the two services should complement each other.

It is wise for the leaders of worship of all ages to talk about the purposes of worship. There is considerable difference of opinion in what we popularly call worship. Many churches get stuck in the concept that worship is the singing part of a church service. But biblical worship is far more. It is coming into God's presence with a sense of awe that leads us to bow down, draw close, and offer our gifts at His altar.

Worship and education overlap, but the subtle difference is in purpose. Education involves taking in all that God has for us and figuring out how to use it. Worship is primarily about offering ourselves back to Him and simply being with Him—thankfully and appreciatively. We set aside our agendas to focus on His majesty.

Both education and worship change us, but in different ways. We learn in a worship setting, and we worship in a learning setting. However, we need balance in our programming. Being aware of the different purposes of worship and education will help to ensure that we don't neglect either area.

Before making decisions about what model to use for children's worship, ask: "How will this program help me accomplish the goal of worship?" That question may be answered differently for different age-level needs.

A primary goal of worship is to bring who we are (the child of 2, 6, or 11 years or the adult of 30, 50 or 75 years) to who God is—the limitless Creator of the universe and Sustainer of His people. All people come to God bringing different gifts and experiences. People come together in corporate worship, they celebrate as one and as individuals, and see God as the Lord of all of life.

Intergenerational

One model is to have one Sunday a month or quarter that is a family Sunday. This allows children to see adults (in addition to their parents) in the practice of worship. It helps children see themselves as a welcome part of the church community. The intergenerational approach to worship requires openness to the needs of all ages. Some churches offer both a children's sermon and an adult sermon. Some churches attempt to make the sermons child-friendly and offer both adult and child-related illustrations. Meeting the needs of all generations in one service is difficult but rewarding. It is a challenge that can be chosen intentionally and purposefully—not because no one wanted to lead children's worship.

The Split Service

A variation of the intergenerational model that retains many of the benefits is the split service. In this model, children are welcomed into the musical portion of worship. They participate until a designated part of the service—usually the offering or just before the sermon. This allows the children to observe people of all ages in worship. Children are usually engaged in music more easily than in long periods of listening.

Children can go to a different area to engage in the same or similar content to the adult sermon, but at an age-appropriate level.

There are some disadvantages to this model. The process of moving the children can disrupt the flow of worship for both the children and the adults. Children's worship leaders may lose a lot of time trying to re-engage the children and may not have adequate time for the message content. This plan may unwittingly exclude children from what is perceived as the "important part" of the service or cause them to feel that there is something they are being excluded from. This model could stress some parents so that they are unprepared for hearing the sermon.

The Extended Service

If the split-service model lacks continuity for children, the extended service is probably the most effective model for keeping children focused. It may be particularly good for preschool-aged children and below because they have more trouble with transitions. Without extended service, young children attach to their Sunday School class, then attach back to their parents, only to return back to a different setting. This may cause unsettled feelings—the last thing we want young children to associate with church! An extended session allows children to engage one Bible story with depth, explore both educational and worship characteristics of a single story, and take the morning's activities at a more leisurely pace.

There are some disadvantages. Teachers who are not clear about the differences between worship and education might be inclined to make the whole experience educational. Teachers may not prepare enough activities. Teachers need a variety of activities, or the children might become bored. This model does not connect children with the greater church or the practices of worship at an early age.

The Celebration Focus

This model takes a low-key approach in recognizing that children are often tired after Sunday School. They need an opportunity for refreshment and perhaps rest. This model believes children should establish an association with fun and fellowship with their church experience. The philosophy behind this model may be that more is caught than taught. This model focuses on positive social experiences in a Christ-centered environment, so kids will come to view church as a place they want to be. It is usually characterized by snacks, games, crafts, and perhaps a character-building video or computer games.

Critics of this approach argue that there is no content, while proponents propose that the content has already been gained in Sunday School. Proponents say the children can celebrate the lesson in real-life activity (especially when the games and activities reinforce the content of the lesson). The goal is for children to WANT to come to church.

The truth is this approach can be used well or poorly. Well-trained facilitators can help children draw connections between the Sunday School lesson and what they are enjoying in children's worship. They can choose activities that encourage children to respond to what they learned with a focus on offering themselves to God through play. Poorly prepared facilitators seldom make these connections and the experience is lost. Transition to the practices of the greater church can be lost in an attitude of self-indulgence or "fun-addiction" that does not always translate to the real life of discipleship.

The Mini-church

Another model is to create a church service that in every way mimics the characteristics of the adult worship service, but it is age-appropriate for children. In some churches, this has led to the careful crafting of child-size pews, hymnals (or overheads or media projection) and the set up of a miniature sanctuary with instruments (or a worship band) and pulpit at the platform. It has a schedule that follows the basic plan of the adult's worship folder or bulletin. The intention is to teach children the elements of worship and create an environment that prepares them for the worship services of the church. It helps them learn the disciplines and behavior associated with adult worship settings, including listening skills.

This model has become less popular as churches have begun to vary their adult worship models. The goals of this model are admirable. Because this model fails to recognize the unique needs of children and adults, it is often no more effective than having children sit in the adult service. Sitting in a children's pew in children's worship is no easier than a 20-minute sermon anywhere else. The key to using this model effectively is to integrate what we know about kids: their attention spans are shorter. They need self-expression in order to discover their place in the church. Their maturity levels are developing at different paces.

The best examples of this model let children participate in planning, preparing, and carrying out worship. It lets them discuss the purposes of each part of the service. It integrates discussion along with information. It follows an abbreviated format.

The least effective use of this model usually involves bribing or threatening children to keep them quiet and in their seats. It sets up an environment where the setting is totally mismatched to the program. For instance, children sit in pews, but adults throw out candy and have a high-energy program on the platform that discourages reflective participation.

The Spectator Focus

Children have become major consumers of high-dollar entertainment. Splashy shows draw children by the hundreds in U.S. metropolitan areas. The church is aware of this, and it recognizes the power of production to get kids excited and keep them engaged. Many adult churches design their adult worship services to fit the spectator model. Only a few members of the congregation actively participate in the Sunday morning service, and the rest of the congregation participates in ministry in other capacities. This is sometimes the profile of what has become known as a seeker-friendly service where high-quality, low-commitment worship purposefully provides an entrance point for unchurched people.

Some children's worship services are designed so an adult or group of adults engage children's attention through drama, performance, illusion, object lesson, clowning, puppets, media, and other entertainment resources. The children participate through group energy and group response. Some churches have created ongoing storylines, characters, and environments that stimulate kids' imaginations as they watch the fun unfold.

There are advantages to this programming model. Children often enjoy this kind of involvement and can draw deep connections from the stories to their lives. It demonstrates a high commitment to children's ministry which becomes more fully developed in other programs. This model generates excitement and a shared

reference point for children who attend. It can be used as a foundation for age-appropriate response activities. This model involves a child emotionally.

There are some disadvantages to this model. It requires a highly-talented staff and a great deal of preparation to do this kind of service consistently and effectively. It requires more people to be effective (some who will be involved in crowd management and/or relationship building activities that build off the event). This model may keep children from learning how to be participants in worship and generate a demand to "top last week." It may focus more on the methods than the message of the gospel. This model may not give children enough help in making connections from the program to their lives.

If you choose a spectator form of worship, it is wise to counter this with other programs or activities that are "fun" but also help children to be actively involved in discipleship.

The Participation Focus

Like the mini-church model, the long-term goal of the participation focus is to build a bridge for children to be incorporated into the main body of the congregation. Many of the elements of this worship experience are the same as the adult service: music, prayer, offerings, biblical focus, and response. However, there is a strong focus on age-appropriateness of each element. Music allows for a great deal of movement. Prayer activities are planned. Offerings often involve more than money. Bible teaching is presented, not through sermon, but through interactive methods. Responses are not just altar calls (though age-appropriate altar calls may certainly be offered). Instead of having a sequence to these elements, they may be interwoven throughout the worship time to help keep children's attention.

Music for Worship

A list of ways music enhances the worship setting might include:

- Music is a wonderful teaching tool. Children quickly learn Bible verses and Bible truths set to music.
- Music is also effective for setting the pace for a gathering. Music can create mood and a climate. Soft music quiets a group. Peppy music creates attention and enthusiasm.
- Designate a song to represent the different segments of your service. Use the same song as a signal of the gathering song or a clean up song or a goodbye song. Music can “speak for you” when children have become accustomed to ordering themselves by a particular tune used for a particular purpose.
- Music is often a gift that children give to adults. Through their active participation in programs and special events, children come to understand what it means to lead in a service. They learn to see themselves as valuable contributors to the Body of Christ.
- Music conveys our doctrines from generation to generation. Great truths are contained in hymns and spiritual songs. Learning these shared songs helps children begin to understand theological principles.
- Music can erase the generation gap when it is used appropriately. Music should never be a weapon used to force a particular kind of experience. However, it records the experiences we share in Christ and helps to communicate our common history. Our songs tell the story we share, and they tell how God is at work from generation to generation. The message stays the same as we rearrange it, stylize it, modernize it, and make it “our own.”
- Music moves us. It expresses our deepest feelings in a way that words alone cannot do.
- Music provides for active participation, even when we are just listening. As we tap our feet, clap our hands, bob our heads, or hum under our breath, we are demonstrating that we are “with” the one who is providing the music.
- Music is often closely associated with prayer. It is a way of expressing ourselves to God as well as to each other.
- Music allows us to express our unity in a way that few other activities do. When we sing or play together, we can’t take off on our own. What makes music successful is the art of merging ourselves in unison or harmony—listening and responding to each other’s voices or instruments.

In many ways, music is a magical gift of God! But using music in worship is an art and a skill that should be applied purposefully toward the goal of helping children direct their full attention to the majesty of God and the wonder of what God accomplishes in human lives.

Like everything else in worship, music should be used in developmentally-appropriate ways. It should help children experience God. Children always have a higher level of listening capacity than they have production capacity. We should never be afraid to expose young children to complicated music for listening. In fact, as we expose them to complex harmonies, we help to develop their ear for appreciation of music and recognition of sound patterns. They can make use of these throughout their lives as they combine those sounds in whatever musical styles their generation comes to value.

When we are singing with young children, however, the rules change. We should use simple melodies with a narrow range of tones. Think of the simple nursery rhyme tunes. They use only a few notes and a lot of repetition. These tunes can be used over and over again with different words. Young children usually sing higher notes more easily than adults do.

Young children can express their love for God to many different tunes. For example, try using the tune of Mary Had A Little Lamb: "I love Jesus, yes I do, yes I do, yes I do! I love Jesus yes I do, I know He loves me too." Or to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star": "I love Jesus, He loves me. I love Jesus, He loves me. I love Jesus, He loves me. I love Jesus He loves me. I love Jesus, He loves me. I love Jesus, He loves me." Great creativity is not a requirement! Instead, great enthusiasm for the great messages of faith does quite well for our youngest children. Experiment with different volumes, different rhythm instruments to play along, even different accents, styles and time signatures. The main thing to remember with the youngest children is to keep it simple.

Physically, keep the youngest children moving. They love motions, signs, and large motor actions such as stomping, arm waving, or marching. You don't have to be a choreographer to pull this off. If you can point to yourself, point up for God, and cross your arms to represent love, you've covered 50 percent of the motions you'll ever need!

In the early elementary years, children tend to value motions they have created. They also like real motions such as American Sign Language. Video presentations of motions can help children feel free to move with a song.

As children progress into the later elementary years, they have developed preferences for their physical expression. Some are comfortable with motions, and others consider it babyish. Allow them the freedom to make choices about motions and whether they participate.

Much depends on the models of worship children have observed. If your congregation does not model physical engagement in worship, it may be a little unfair to insist that older elementary children continue to go through the motions that are so vital to earlier phases of musical worship. Try simple clapping or increasing the expectations by using complicated movement that is challenging to them.

Whatever you do, resist the urge to make an issue out of the motions as children move into fourth grade and beyond. If you provide adult male models especially for the boys' benefit, you may catch the boys periodically joining in. If you use older children as models for the younger children, you may keep the older children truly enjoying physical musical expressions for a longer time. If you force children to do

motions when they truly are uncomfortable, you may create resistance that goes far beyond music. It is not worth that!

Older elementary children are not necessarily just becoming rebellious. They are often just reacting to the changes in their bodies that range from voice changes to rapid growth that makes them uncomfortable.

Another way to keep older children physically engaged with music is to add performance props and more mature choreography. Instead of singing some might prefer instruments. One church had a program where the preteens had a Bell Choir—only the preteens could be in the Bell Choir and they became very proud of their accomplishments. They continued to be involved with music but were allowed a break from singing. Your church may not be able to afford a set of bells but you can become creative and provide an alternative music program to singing.

Methods for Your Message

Scripture should always form the basis for your content in worship, but you may also use themes and concepts during your message. There are many different ways to deliver a children's sermon. Listed below are some of the most common, along with common benefits and potential pitfalls of each.

Puppets

Hundreds of years ago, the first use of puppets in the church was not with children but with adults. These puppets, called "marionettes" (translated Little Marys) were used to tell stories to the illiterate masses in a way that would hold their attention.

The use of marionettes in the church today is limited, but many different kinds of puppets are available for use with children. Some more elaborate setups require staging and two people per puppet—one to run the mouth and the other to operate hands and arms. Many prerecorded scripts are available to minimize the time necessary to create a well-timed, well-executed puppet performance. There's nothing worse than a puppet who doesn't know how to move his mouth in time with the words! A tape allows the puppeteer to focus on the craft rather than the script.

A stage is not necessary for all puppets. There are hand puppets, ventriloquists' "dummies," finger puppets, and puppets using all kinds of inanimate objects given human characteristics. These puppets can be used effectively in acting out real-life scenarios that illustrate Bible truths.

Young children often communicate with puppets spontaneously. For this reason, a theme is more important than a script.

A puppet can be a great tool for continuity when the adults in charge vary from week to week.

Good puppetry uses lots of voice characterization, humor, and mystery. Puppets should not be seen in public in their floppy state. Puppets should maintain their character as they move from place to place. They should not be left where kids can become too familiar with them. It should be a privilege to touch the puppet, and the puppets should be treated with respect by children. Puppets are most effective when they keep their "personalities" intact. The same puppet should not be a hero one week and a villain the next (unless, of course, he assumes a different costume).

Ventriloquism is a skill that is more easily acquired than you might think. It is actually accomplished by substituting just five letter sounds in the English language. With a little practice, you could have some very convincing conversations with yourself!

Finger puppets, spoon puppets, and paper puppets mounted on Popsicle sticks are tools for children. These puppets give children a way to retell a story or interact with the storyteller as the drama unfolds. These are their puppets to use as they want to use them.

Even young children can stage interactions between characters. You can draw faces on their little fingertips and encourage the young children to use their fingers as different characters.

Gospel Illusion

Gospel illusion is another good worship tool. You can take time to learn some simple sleight of hand movements or purchase a few good tricks. It is important that these tools be used as illustrations of truths that are developmentally appropriate for the children you are teaching. For example, no matter how "cool" a trick looks, it is not meaningful if a child cannot understand the point you are trying to teach. All tricks need to be age appropriate for their level of understanding.

<http://www.professorwonder.com/magic17.htm>.

Clowning and Juggling

Clowns often do balloon shaping, comedy acts, face painting, storytelling, pantomime, and other performance skills that most kids love. Clowns can interact with each other, interact with a "straight man," or never say a word! Clowns can get away with saying some of the things kids may be actually thinking, and then the misconception can be cleared up by a wise advisor.

An illustration of how humor can teach important lessons:

Teacher tip: Memorize this skit. Put on a clown nose or wig, and demonstrate some Christian Clowning, complete with props. Use a toy drill, like the one that is powered by pulling a string. Or use a real drill, but be very careful with it around the children.

Clown #1: Well, kids, it's time to have a Bible drill. (He pulls out the drill and aims it at some of the children.)

Teacher: That's not how you have a Bible drill!

Clown #1: Sure it is. (Aiming it at the kids again) How else are we going to make these kids HOLEY?

Teacher: Put that thing away! That's not the right kind of drill for a Bible drill. In church, when we say holy, we mean set apart and righteous, not kids with holes drilled in them. God makes people holy when they ask Him to change their lives forever, and they obey God every day. Kids, let's have a Bible drill while (turning to Clown #1) YOU go put that drill in a safe place.

Source: Adapted from: <http://www.webclowns.com/christian.htm>

Recent studies have shown that many children are very afraid of clowns and that care should be taken when using clowns with very young children.

Drama

Like puppets, dramas are another unique way of telling stories, presenting concepts and influencing responses. Also, like puppets, dramas are a great way to draw children into a story.

You can use drama effectively with children of all ages if you select your format carefully.

Preschool

Any acting out of drama scenes by this age must be very simple. There should be no speaking parts unless it is one word to be repeated over and over. Don't use complex motions. An example of how children of this age can participate would be the waving of palm branches during the story of the Triumphal Entry. Children can also pretend to be a fisherman throwing a net out to catch fish. Any behavior that can be acted out is appropriate as long as it is clearly explained. If teachers would like to include preschoolers in play or drama that is being performed by older children, preschoolers can play the still parts like the animals at the manger in the Christmas story.

Kindergarten—Third Grade

Acting out Bible stories is wonderful for this age-group. You can also enhance the drama by adding a prop or two. For example, use a crown for the king or queen or a staff for a shepherd. It doesn't take too many props to make drama fun and add some visuals for the audience. Teachers can assign roles to students and briefly explain what their part is. Allow the children to use their creativity to act out the story. Even the children who are not acting out the story love to see their peers using the props.

Another fun way to use drama with this age group is to have a child interview a Bible character. You can help with the questions, but let the child be the news reporter. Teachers will have to work a little overtime in the beginning to assist children in not being intimidated and learning how to ad-lib.

Fourth—Sixth Grade

The older children can use all the different types of drama—full scale plays or musicals, small plays, skits, and reader's theater.

The older children seem to enjoy the reader's theater. The teacher provides a script ahead of time with a narrator and actors. The actors stand with their backs to the audience until they are brought into the story by the narrator. As the actors begin their reading part, they turn toward the audience. If they are no longer a part of the story, they again turn away from the audience. This way the story is shared and children can participate but they only have to speak to act. They act by speaking faster, slower, louder, or softer.

Drama can also be used by adults who perform for children. You can use monologues, dramatic dialogs, interpretive reading, role-playing, improvisation (if you're quick on your feet), as well as more formal skits and plays.

Object Lessons

Object lessons take items or objects that are familiar to children and use them to teach a truth or lesson. For example, you might use a math book to remind children of a time when they thought something was too hard for them (like the math at the end of the book). However, by the end of the year, the problems made sense. The children learned they could do any problem in the book. From this object lesson, children learn that God's way sometimes seems too hard for us. However, the Holy Spirit stays with

us and teaches us God's ways, little by little. As we learn, we become more confident that with God's help we can handle the problems that come our way.

The best object lessons make a clear connection and involve the children in the process of discovering the connection on their own through effective questioning.

Jesus used the strategy of object lessons. He used items that were common to the people He was teaching. One of the greatest mistakes in using object lessons is trying to introduce two new ideas at the same time. This may provide for an interesting lesson, but it defeats the purpose of using something known to teach an unknown (or only slightly understood). Because young children are very concrete, they are unlikely to have the cognitive skills to make the appropriate connections. For example, a preschool child who participated in the object lesson above could not understand the significance of a math book. The young child might form a completely false but literal conclusion that a math book is another kind of Bible.

Lesson 17: Leading Children in Worship

Due This Lesson

Plan for follow-up
Reading Resource 16-7
Reading Resource 16-8
Children's Church lesson
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- Describe the purposes of worship.
- List several models and methods for children's worship.
- Know the strategies and skills required for using music effectively in children's worship.

Homework Assignments

Plan a complete worship service for children based on the information we discussed. It should include: Topic, Scripture, Music, Student involvement, and method of lesson presentation.

Visit a children's worship service at another church. Write a one-page paper of your experience.

Read Resource 17-5.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include your thoughts about the models of worship and what you think is best.

Resources

<http://keyboardsforchrist.com/kids%20in%20worship.html>

<http://www.professorwonder.com/magic17.htm> Magic Tricks as teaching tools

Small Groups

For each of the models of Children's Worship, take the advantages of that model and create a positive worship experience that diminishes the disadvantages. What would you do or how would you accomplish the task?

Intergenerational

The Split Service

The Extended Service

The Celebration Focus

The Mini-church

The Spectator Focus

The Participation Focus

Important Elements to Keep in Mind for Children's Worship

1. Variety may be the spice of life, but repetition is the meat and potatoes.
2. Pay close attention to making worship different from instructional classes.
3. Demonstrate worship yourself.
4. Be intentional about encouraging children to take part in whatever model you choose.
5. Don't miss teachable moments.

A Sample Participatory Worship with Schedule

Theme: God is caring.

Bible Passage: Matthew 6:30

Response: We are like God when we care for others.

Before the Service. While the children gather, provide different stations or centers based on the day's theme to get children involved immediately. One station may serve snacks. This usually will take about 10 minutes.

Music. Start the music as a signal to gather for worship (call to worship). Allow about 15 minutes for music.

"Share-n-Care." Give the children an opportunity to share how they have seen God at work during the week. You can plan an open sharing time, or you can select a certain number of children to share each week. One children's pastor wears a carpenter's tool pack with the pockets in the front. He has little prizes to pull out to give to those who share. Allow about 5 minutes.

Bible Truth. Share a Bible truth, using whatever creative approaches you might choose. For example, prepare to tell the parable of the Good Shepherd by making frequent use of the words LOVE and CARE. Have the children listen for those two words. When they hear the word *love*, have them tap their hearts. When they hear the word *care*, have them pat the shoulder of the person next to them. Allow 15 minutes.

Respond to the Bible Truth. Let the children respond to the Bible truth in small groups. Encourage the children to share ways God has cared for them and ways they can care for others. This segment can include collecting an offering. Children could make a care card to be sent to someone who missed church today. The children can pray for each other as a caring action. Allow 10 minutes.

Closing. Present a challenge for the week from the Bible truth. For example, since your story was about God's love and care, you might give the children a choice between two acts of love and care they could do for their families this week as they live God-like lives. Have the children show their commitment to accept the challenge by stepping to one side of the room for option one and the other side for option two. Pray a brief prayer of benediction before dismissing them. Allow five minutes.

Accomplishing Worship Goals

Roles of the Worship Leader

1. The worship leader selects the songs to facilitate worship.
 - Action songs—high energy
 - Adoration songs—low energy but high intensity
 - Adult worship songs—teaching children the music of their larger faith community
 - Psalms—scripture songs
 - Hymns—music that conveys important truth
 - Spiritual songs—usually original or very modern songs
2. The worship leader models worship.
3. The worship leader should help children understand the meaning behind the music.
4. The worship leader sets the environment and tone for experiencing God.

Practical Guidelines

- Children need both predictability and surprise.
- Be creative.
- Be clear.
- Be sensitive.
- Integrate brief prayers with singing.
- Continually narrow the children's focus.
- Obtain appropriate permission and give credit for any music and lyrics you use that are not public domain.

Understanding the Value of a Philosophy

A philosophy helps us line up the pieces of wisdom that we have accumulated over the course of a lifetime in a way that people can make sense of the picture. A philosophy describes an attitude toward life or a specific part of life. It captures how we understand things should be. When you hear someone say, "I have a philosophical problem with that," they are actually saying that something violates the way they believe things should be.

In this case, you are creating philosophy of children's ministry. You are looking at how your sense of what *should be* informs what you *plan and do* in ministry to children. The philosophy doesn't describe what we actually do, it describes ideas that we value. The things we value then dictate the things we do.

For example, if we value time with God, we ensure that our schedules allow for this time. In reality, we know that many things can interfere with our schedules and get in the way of our values. We can become so busy, we can lose track of our values. If we regularly reexamine our values, it can help us to get back on track.

A philosophy serves the same purpose. It reminds us of details that we might lose track of in the busyness of ministry.

A philosophy organizes our thinking into a small "space." It brings our thoughts from a class like this and uses the information to guide and direct our vision, mission, and practices in ministry. The pyramid in Resource 18-1 shows how each block in our ministry builds on the ideas before it. In a perfect world, no block should ever contradict the messages of the blocks before it.

A philosophy takes a snapshot of where you are at a particular point in time—putting your attitude toward life into a written document. You will continue to grow in wisdom as long as you live. And as long as you are growing, your philosophy will grow with you. Some points will remain the same and will anchor your ministry to what you feel is most important. Whenever there is a conflict between the blocks of the pyramid, something needs to change. Either your philosophy has changed, or the practices that are not in harmony with the philosophy should change.

Lesson 18: A Philosophy of Ministry

Due This Lesson

Worship service plan
Visit a children's worship service
Reading Resource 17-5
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- Understand the value in identifying a philosophy of ministry.
 - Understand what components should be considered in developing a philosophy of ministry.
 - Begin to write a philosophy of ministry.

Homework Assignments

Work on your philosophy of ministry paper, following the process we discussed in class. You will hand in your finished paper in the last class. Bring a copy of your rough/near-finished draft with you to the next class.

Read Resource 18-4.

Read Resource 18-5.

Write in your journal. How has working on a philosophy of ministry impacted your life?

Quotes

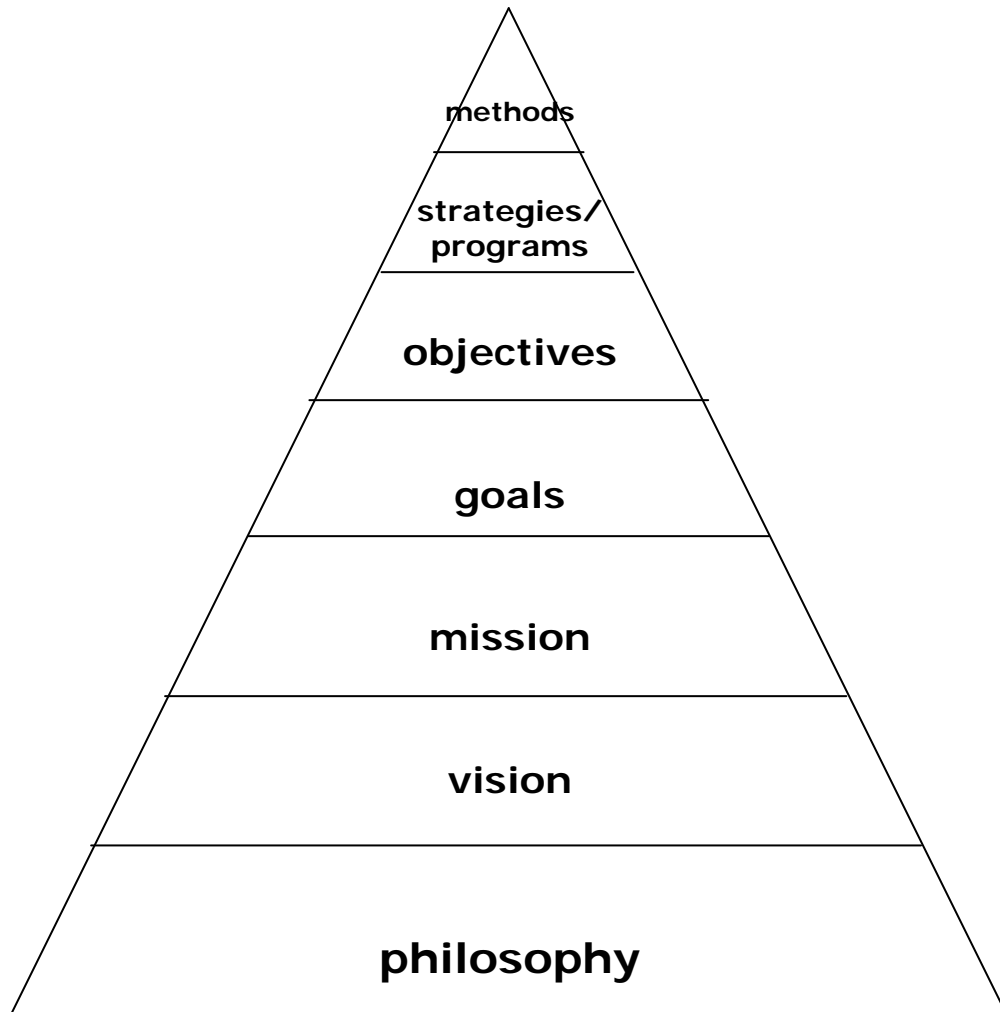
"Philosophy is the science which considers truth."
—Aristotle.

"Philosophy, rightly defined, is simply the love of wisdom."
—Cicero

"A true philosophy will always show that a vast, perhaps the larger, proportion of the truth arises from the seemingly irrelevant."
—Edgar Allen Poe

"Philosophy is like trying to open a safe with a combination lock; each little adjustment of the dial seems to achieve nothing; only when everything is in place does the door open."
—Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Philosophy Pyramid



Understanding the Components of a Philosophy

Personal Basis

- What are the major forces that have shaped your life?
- What do you notice about what you have learned about life so far?
- What has God done for you? How is He changing your life?
- How do you take care of yourself so that you can minister effectively to others?
- How will you continue learning so you can lead others?
- What are some influential resources—books, thoughts, people, experts, experiences—that have shaped your thoughts? Look for quotes that express your own thoughts and feelings well.

Theological Basis

- What do you believe about God? What is God's nature, what characteristics dominate God's interaction with humanity? (Don't forget that God exists in three persons and each has a role in your ministry.)
- What do you believe about people? What are they like? What do they need or long for?
- What do you believe about sin and salvation?
- What do you believe about Scripture and how it should be used?
- What do you believe about the church?
- What does God want from His people? How do you believe God wants us to live?

Human Development (developmental basis)

- What are children like physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, spiritually?
- What do they need from adults?

- How should we understand and work with their changing needs?
- What are some key characteristics that help us understand what children need for spiritual formation?
- What role does family play in children's lives?
- What role does the church play in children's lives?

Cultural Basis

- What do you understand about the world you live in? What is the world like?
- What trends or forces do you recognize that may influence the children and the church?
- What should be the church's role in interacting with cultural forces?
- Are there historical events that influence how you see the world today?

Ministry Basis

- What do you understand about how the church works in practical terms (universal, denominational, local)?
- How do you understand your role in the church?
- What responsibilities do the church and children have to each other? The church and families?
- What attitudes should the church have toward children?
- What social roles and responsibilities does the church have toward children?
- What should the church NOT do in relation to children?
- What should you always keep in mind when working with children in the church?

Education/Learning Basis

- How do you think people learn? What are specific characteristics of how children learn?
- What is the relationship between content knowledge and wisdom for life?
- What specifically do you want children to learn (content, attitudes, behaviors, skills)?
- What conditions or attitudes need to be present for children to learn?
- What are the roles of the teacher, the pastor, and the parent?
- What teaching skills or behaviors promote learning?

Administrative Basis

- How should the children's ministry function?
- Are there standards for conducting ministry to children?
- What should be the standards for planning?
- How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your ministry to children?

Ultimate Outcomes

- What should happen for children, parents, and the church as a result of children's ministry?
- How does God see your efforts?
- How does this ministry fit into God's plans?

How to Write a Philosophy

Step 1: Outline it.

Step 2: Sit with it.

Step 3: Begin Writing.

Step 4: Discuss Some Issues to Clarify Thoughts.

Step 5: Support Your Thoughts.

Writing the Paper

Rough draft

- Use the outline
- Write one section at a time
- Don't worry about length
- You won't answer all the questions
- Take a break between each section

Revise

- Set the draft aside for a time
- Come back to it
- Correct any errors
- *Option:* Have a friend read it

Finalize

- Check the length
- Add details or key information
- Make any necessary changes
- *Option:* Have a friend read it
- Write the final draft

Why Children Misbehave

1. Children are searching for their place.

All children want to belong. Limits help children to know where they stand. Have you ever tried to climb up or down stairs in a strange place with the lights off? You know there's a stairway there, but you don't know how high the steps are or how far they are apart. What is that like? What do you do in that situation?

Exactly! You test the limits. You kick your foot out and you make some tentative movements. It is a very uncomfortable feeling. If you try to take a step that isn't there or miss a step, it can be very painful. You have nothing by which to judge your limits.

Children sometimes misbehave as they search for a place within their peer group. They do (or don't do) something in order to be accepted as part of the group, or to stand out from the group. Children often misbehave if there is not a climate of cooperation within the group or if they don't feel part of the group.

2. Chaotic boundaries.

Sometimes there is a problem with the classroom structure. Sometimes there is a problem at home. Boundaries for social behavior may not have been taught by parents, or the consequences for negative behavior are inconsistent. Sometimes, the consequences for negative behavior are better for a child than no parental attention at all. Kids who feel that way may misbehave indiscriminately.

3. Boredom.

Kids who do not engage in the environment around them—the activities you have planned—make their own entertainment. Usually this starts out subtly, but it can be a full-fledged revolt if the children are good leaders.

4. Environmental factors.

Some children are easily influenced by factors such as room arrangement. For example, if the furniture is arranged in such a way that there is a lot of open space, this invites running. Similarly, if the temperature is not optimal, children may be wiggly or lethargic. Usually environmentally stimulated misbehavior is physical misbehavior (but not all physical misbehavior is environmentally stimulated).

5. Mismatch of "pace."

Activities may be too fast for some children to be able to plug in to what you are saying or asking them to do. Or, the pace could be too slow for them to avoid their own agendas (similar to boredom). When you move along too quickly and don't check for understanding, children soon become discouraged and stop trying

It is interesting to note that young children process verbs faster than they process other parts of speech. So when you say, "Don't run," what they hear first is the action

word, RUN. It takes them longer to cue into the word, "don't." As a result, they may DO the word before they finish thinking about your directions.

Also, giving more than one direction at a time may cause some children to have processing problems. When you give a series of instructions, use your fingers to list the order (along with order words, such as first, second, then, last) or give visual cues such as pictures or a list for older children. Don't assume that a child who doesn't follow directions doesn't WANT to do the task.

6. Need for control.

Some children (not many) take delight in exploring the emotional reactions they can engender. They want to control the emotions of a group. They may enjoy shocking you or a peer, making a person angry, upset, or something else. This is the class clown profile.

This behavior is usually connected with one or more of the other reasons for misbehavior, such as boredom or chaotic boundaries.

7. Feeling disrespected.

Children very often respond in kind. When children feel they are not taken seriously, not treated their age, not treated fairly, or are ignored, they may respond with negative behavior. This disrespect may be real or perceived and may come from teachers or peers. The usual response is often to be disrespectful to everyone in their way.

8. Physical issues.

A child who is hungry cannot focus, becomes grouchy, and struggles with judgment. If children do not identify their condition as hunger, they are pressed to act competitively as though they are food-seeking.

Overtired children begin to over-secrete adrenaline, the fight or flight hormone, and their behaviors are directed toward aggression or withdrawal (tears and other emotional cries for help).

Children who are over-stimulated by too much activity may have a hard time "coming down" or making the transition to the demands of a different kind of behavior.

These situations are not excuses for misbehavior, but they are physical conditions that cause a child to struggle with an activity you are prescribing.

There are physical disabilities, diagnosed or undiagnosed, that interfere with a child's ability to act (or not act) with intent. Children who suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome, ADHD, or other physical conditions need understanding along with disciplinary consequences. Children who appear not to be listening may not be hearing. When problems are consistent, don't presume the problems are attitude problems. Look for actual reasons a child may be non-compliant.

9. Inappropriate expectations.

Young children lack the ability to understand the full consequences of their behavior. It is not naughty to pour glue all over the paper. It is a problem caused by lack of

experience with the amount of pressure required to get the appropriate amount of glue in the right place (or perhaps a fascination with the process of gluing that far exceeds their desire to be careful with the product they are gluing!)

Children may know there is a rule about running down the hallway, but they lack understanding of why that rule matters—give them some examples. Obedience accompanied by understanding wins over blind obedience every time.

10. Stress or trauma.

Constant stress interferes with natural development. As you deal with children whose families are troubled, remember that traumatized or constantly-stressed children will lag behind developmentally. Physically a child may be nine, but he or she may have the self-management skills of a seven-year old. Emotionally, children may appear to be “older” because of the situations they have dealt with. However, these children may be socially immature, physically unable to accomplish small motor tasks, mentally unable to read on grade level. In severe cases, the architecture of the brain is actually changed so reasoning ability is affected. These children need special tools to manage their behavior and a great deal of understanding and love as they learn.

Profiles in Behavior

Miss Piggy—An old greeting card shows a portrait of Jim Henson’s puppet, Miss Piggy, yelling “Attention, Attention, Attention, PLEASE!” Open the card and you understand Miss Piggy’s motive, “I just love attention.”

It’s not WHAT these children have to say that is so important. They want to GET the attention they need. These children will do all kinds of things to distract, stir up, and challenge the flow. Their behaviors may be yelling out inappropriate answers, or exhibiting radically perfectionist tendencies to get every cotton ball in the craft project in just the right place. Most of this student’s misbehavior, though, is verbal and demands the class to be diverted from the purpose of the lesson.

Teachers find this behavior irritating. However, this kind of misbehavior shows the children really want to be connected to you and the rest of the class.

You have probably heard the advice, “Just ignore it, and it will stop.” However, Miss Piggy will always find someone to give her attention—enough to keep her convinced her strategy is working. Often, this kind of misbehavior is seen in children who have not learned to ask for attention in appropriate ways. Maybe they get too little attention at home, and they don’t develop self-confidence. Maybe they get so much attention at home they have become self-centered. Perhaps adults in their lives pay more attention to bad behavior than good behavior.

Superhero—This child may or may not actually feel powerful, but he or she is determined to make each situation into a war of momentous proportions. An introverted Superhero may pleasantly insist on doing his or her own thing, whatever else is happening. An extroverted Superhero may throw aggressive temper tantrums. This child uses physical misbehavior: kicking, pushing, or insisting on being the only child sitting when the rest of the class is standing up or vice versa. This child can make a teacher feel angry, frustrated, or drawn into a struggle for authority. The wonderful thing about this child is his or her independent thinking skill and the ability to stand firm.

Some of this behavior seems to be inborn (or strong-minded). Other factors may contribute to this pattern of behavior, such as witnessing lots of aggressive behavior or violence in life or through the media.

Sullen Saul—This child, like King Saul, wants to make everyone else miserable. Also like King Saul, this child’s behavior may range from: actively seeking revenge, to a pouting refusal to participate, to overt criticism (This is dumb!). Since attack is part of the picture, this child causes a teacher to feel defensive, hurt, or angry.

This is the child who can be a challenge to love. However, you need to know most of this behavior is directed toward self-protection. This kind of behavior can have its roots in physical or emotional abuse. This can come from inside the home, outside forces, feelings of victimization, or being bullied as an individual or as part of a social group. This child is familiar with labels—the poor kid, the racially different kid, the foster kid, and other labels.

Fearful Fran—Life for these children is chaotic because they use all kinds of crutches to avoid failing or admitting to failure. The motto is, “If I don’t try, I can’t fail!” These children can fall into tears when challenged or lie adamantly when confronted. This is the student who “didn’t hear you” say it was time to come in, or “can’t” twist the lid on the glue bottle. These children often won’t answer questions or won’t participate (though usually not in a defiant way). This leaves a teacher confused, guilty, or just unappreciated. Often, however, these children truly want to succeed. They can succeed if the stakes are lowered so a mistake does not matter as much as they think it does.

Sometimes this behavior is caused by unrealistic expectations or the belief that only perfection is acceptable. Sometimes a highly competitive environment is to blame.

Enthusiastic Erin—This child knows the answer to every question and can’t wait to share it. Present questions with mandatory wait times. Say, “I’ll call on someone when three people have their hands raised.” You can usually appeal to fairness as well. “Let’s give everyone a chance to think it through.”

Energetic Eric—This child can’t wait to get on to the next project. He’s already done this 100 times! Engage these children as one of your set-up helpers for the next activity.

Sharing Shelly—This child is a friend to everyone and wants to chat during your instructions. Ask these children to listen carefully so they can help anyone who has questions.

Perfect Pete—This child wants everyone to shape up and fly right. These children have a clear sense of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Teach these children to “model” good behavior. Compliment them in private rather than pointing it out publicly, so other children will not resent this well-behaved child!

Lesson 19: Discipline and Classroom Management

Due This Lesson

Rough draft of Philosophy of Ministry
Reading Resource 18-4
Reading Resource 18-5
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- understand some reasons children misbehave
- suggest interventions for particular misbehaviors
- identify some strategies for developing an environment that promotes self-discipline

Homework Assignments

Finalize your Philosophy of Ministry. Use the comments and suggestions from your classmate and instructor to clarify and improve your paper.

Observe several classrooms—church and/or school. What behaviors did you observe? How was it handled? What was the style of classroom management? What rules were evident? What did you learn that will help you in your ministry? Write a 2-page paper.

Bring your journal to class. The instructor will be verifying that you have been faithful to the journaling assignment.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights about the material presented in class. Include a section on either your current discipline practices with children or your ideas for implementing a plan in the future.

A Church-wide Policy

It is important for all children's workers and children's leadership to work together as a team. Having a church-wide discipline policy helps everyone be consistent in methods and practices.

- A church-wide discipline policy must be consistent, but open and flexible enough to allow for the personalities and preferences of each teacher to have a role in the classroom.
- A church-wide discipline policy must have spiritual formation as its primary objective. In order to do that, the policies must encourage personal responsibility and thoughtful application of biblical principles in a developmentally-appropriate way.
- A church-wide discipline policy must have some principles that are "absolute" based on an understanding of God's value on children and the laws of the land.
- A church-wide discipline policy should establish lines of accountability between the child, the teacher, the supervising pastor, and the parents.
- A church-wide discipline policy should be publicized freely so all adults can correct children in the spirit of discipleship.

An example of this kind of policy is:

1. Adults will never physically discipline a child.
2. Adults will not yell at or degrade a child. A raised voice is appropriate only to get the attention of a child who is in immediate danger.
3. If adults can no longer manage the behavior of a child in the classroom, they will contact the children's pastor (or director) who will take one of the following actions at his or her discretion:
 - Remove the child from the classroom for conferencing
 - Assign a personal mentor to the child so he or she can remain in the classroom
 - Request the parents to make a decision on what the child should do instead of being in class that day
4. Adults will never ban a child from a class or worship session. Commitment to this principle may demand that parents participate in the classroom or that special arrangements be made on a regular basis.

Church-wide Rules

Many churches also find it helpful to have church-wide rules of behavior for the children. Some guidelines for this strategy are:

- Make the rules simple and few.
- Post the rules and remind everyone about the rules regularly.
- Share the rules with parents, students, and the greater church community.
- Make the rules narrow enough to be agreed upon by the whole team and broad enough to allow each team member to be themselves in managing their classroom.
- Call them behavior standards, Christ-like conduct guidelines, powerful principles, or something else! Do not call them rules.

Reasons for not calling them rules:

1. A rule-based system invites rebellion:
 - “If I don’t get caught, it doesn’t count.”
 - “Where there’s a law, there’s a loophole.”
 - “I can do anything you didn’t say I couldn’t.”
2. You can’t create or remember enough rules to cover every situation.
3. Rules teach kids to rely on a list rather than to engage in thoughtful personal responsibility for their actions.
4. Most importantly, from a spiritual perspective, it encourages a legalistic way of life rather than a principle-based way of thinking about life—an Old Testament rather than a New Testament way.



Counselor Training *04



Secure

Focus on physical, emotional, and spiritual safety.
Base rules on physical and emotional safety.
Make kids aware of God's love through your love.



Affirming

Affirm the individuality of each child as he or she is created by God.
Affirm that God is at work in each child's life, whether you (or they!) understand how or not.
Affirm the child's desire to please, belong, and be accepted



FUN, FUN, FUNNY

Kids love to laugh.
Lots of problems are avoided through humor.
The same things aren't fun for every child...focus them on participation for the sake of others' fun.
Bible is fun.



Encouraging

Encourage relationships.
Encourage committed practice of Biblical truth.
Encourage connections to Christian life.
Encourage habits and experiences that can be taken home.

ONLY TWO RULES

Safety First

Respect Always

To encourage good choices, ask: Is it safe? Is it respectful?

Lesson 20: Ready to Minister

Due This Lesson

Philosophy of Ministry
Observation paper
Journal
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- understand what children can be expected to learn about God and the Bible.
- know how they can disciple children and teach them to disciple others.
- share their philosophy of ministry with their classmates.

Homework Assignments

Commit to life-long learning and to a ministry of serving precious children that leads them to Christ.

Resources

www.wordaction.com/go/DISCIPLES.

Organizing Principle and Age-Level Goals

The editorial staff of WordAction Curriculum and the staff of Children's Ministries have formulated this organizing principle and the age-level goals.

Organizing Principle for Children's Curriculum

We study the Bible to know, love, and serve the God of the Bible.

Overarching Goals for Children's Sunday School Curriculum

To help children . . .

1. Desire a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
2. Accept Jesus as Savior
3. Become lifelong disciples
4. Develop a biblical worldview*
5. Be a part of and participate in Christian community
6. Develop skills to do their part in fulfilling the Great Commission

Age-Group Goals

The goals for each age-group build on those from previous age-groups. Goals for earlier age-groups run through all the higher levels. See Resource 16-1.

*"Worldview" is a term used to describe the belief system "lens" through which a person understands and interprets the world, and by which he or she or makes decisions about the world. In the Wesleyan theological tradition, a biblical worldview is a way of both processing what happens in the world, through the lens of scriptural truth, and of affirming that human nature and society can be radically transformed by the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ and energized in us by the Holy Spirit.

Discipleship Study

1. Who is a disciple? A disciple is a person who follows the teachings and example of another person. Jesus called people to become His followers. His followers loved Him, learned from Him, and obeyed Him. They lived their lives the way Jesus lived His life.
2. What is discipleship? Discipleship involves information and transformation. As disciples of Jesus, we learn about and obey His teachings. Our lives are transformed as we live by and obey His teachings.

There are three kinds of discipleship:

- Classic discipleship involves curriculum such as Sunday School, children’s worship, or mid-week classes. This form of discipleship brings children into contact with others in the faith. Classic discipleship provides a solid information foundation.
 - Christian Spiritual Formation focuses on spiritual disciplines as children grow in their relationship with God. These spiritual disciplines include: prayer, Bible reading, baptism, communion, and membership. These disciplines help children develop habits of faith that foster their spiritual maturity.
 - Community involves the church. Discipleship does not happen in isolation. The church is a source for wholesome relationships for children. The church is designed to help us bear each other’s burdens, find comfort and support, and confess our needs.
3. Who has disciplined you? Take time to think of at least six people who have disciplined you. In what role and in what way did these people support you in your Christian life?
 4. Who are some New Testament examples of disciplers? Briefly explain how the first person disciplined the second person.
 - Ananias—Saul
 - Barnabas—Saul
 - Philip—the Ethiopian
 - Aquila and Priscilla—Apollos
 - Paul—Timothy
 - Paul—Lydia
 5. What would be some benefits of being a disciple-maker? Being a disciple-maker can be rewarding and challenging. There are benefits to discipleship and there are roadblocks for the disciple and the disciple-maker. Have the students read the scripture and tell the benefit.
 - John 13:35—Love is a benefit. We love and are loved by others.
 - Romans 15:14—Disciple-makers have a unique relationship with God that allows them to teach others. They have goodness, knowledge, and competence. When we don’t know the exact words to say, we trust the Holy Spirit to lead us in what to say.
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:11—We can depend on others to help us.

- James 5:16—We have friends to whom we can express our needs and confess our wrongdoing. Disciples pray for one another.

6. What roadblocks keep us from being disciple-makers?

- Galatians 6:9—Discouragement. Christians may become discouraged. Not everyone wants to become a disciple, and some people may not want to hear about Jesus. Friends may tease or make fun of our attempts. Results do not always happen immediately. We have to be patient.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:13. Bad choices may cause you to lose credibility with others. Bad choices hurt our attempts to be a disciple, and these choices reflect wrongly on all Christians. Don't get tired of doing what is right.
- Hebrews 10:25—Being alone. Being a Christian is not a solitary life. Christians can attend and participate in church events to help them learn, grow, and worship God. The fellowship of others keeps us encouraged.

7. How can I be a disciple-maker? One of the best ways to be a disciple-maker is to share with others how you became a disciple. Share your story with others. Take about five minutes to write your story or tell it to someone.

Another way to be a disciple-maker is to tell others what God is doing in your life right now! Take a few minutes to write or tell someone how God has helped you recently. For kids, this may be: God's healing a friend or relative who was sick; keeping the child calm when he or she faced an important test at school; courage to stand up to peers who tempt the child to do wrong; and strength to obey God when others are doing wrong.

A third way to be a disciple-maker is to start a small group or participate in a small group. A Sunday School class is a great example of a small group. In the class, children or adults study the Bible, pray together, and grow closer to God.

8. Who can I disciple? Disciples of Jesus are called to be disciple-makers. List three people whom you could disciple.

9. How do I disciple those people?

- Pray for the people on your list. Ask God to help you find ways to disciple them.
- Share with them your story about becoming a disciple.
- Get together with them. Share the Bible with them and pray for them.
- Keep growing as a disciple. You need to continue growing as a Christian, so you can be a good example for those you want to become disciples.

10. How long can I be a disciple? Discipleship is a lifelong journey. One of the greatest joys for a children's pastor or parent is to be the catalyst for a child's choice to begin the lifelong journey of discipleship.

Endnotes

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