

Part IV

**Church-Shaped
Children's Ministry
in
Other Church
Settings**

Wisdom Gleaned from Many

The follow information I gleaned during interviews I conducted in the spring of 2020 from men who have gone out from CHBC to pastor churches around the world. They all have in common a 9Marks-of-a-Healthy-Church approach to pastoring that they have sought to apply to their particular church situation. Their decades of experience pastoring churches and thinking about serving families is summarized in this section. I was greatly encouraged at the consistent patterns of wisdom and good fruit that appeared in compiling their accounts.

“Preach and pray. Love and stay” is the simple model my husband gives pastors looking for their churches to become healthy or stay healthy churches. (<https://www.9marks.org/article/the-priority-of-patience-prayer-and-preaching-in-church-planting/> is just one article that discusses these ideas. The 9marks.org website is filled with many other helpful resources like this!) Everything I’ve gathered from the pastors I interviewed points to the wisdom of this advice, even as concerns children’s ministry. So grateful to all the men who took time to provide their thoughts! I hope you will benefit from their prudent counsel and experiences in the school of hard knocks.

One last note before you read: I have grouped the interview materials, by basic church type (Church Plant, Church Plants Overseas, and Church Re-vitalizations/Healthy Churches). I would suggest you reading the summaries from all the different church types, whether it is your church type or not. There is so much helpful information in each description that can be applied to each of the other church settings.

chapter 26

Church Plants

Transition Is Tough

Church plants frequently begin with a perfect storm of a few families, a lot of kids, rented, non-church facilities. Sometimes, only the pastors' family makes up the entire children's ministry, making in feel like an imposition to ask those without children to provide child care for the pastor's family. Even those with a larger number of charter members have difficulties. Frequently the adult members bring with them an equally large number of children. All may plan for what they think they will need or will and encounter, but they face weeks, even months of experimenting to find the best way to support their families in this new setting. On top of that, most church plants are sent out from a larger, established church where family life and children's ministry were more easily and more fully served. As much as you THINK you know that things will be different, you still have to experience it and that can be frustrating and discouraging.

Best Advice from Church Planters (in terms of children's ministry):

1. It's of Far Greater Consequence that You Might First Think

Children's ministry affects most of your church in one way or the other: your kids, your parents, your member volunteers, your happiness in your facility, your attractiveness to new families. And, since church plants are planted to grow, you aren't even just looking at how to serve your current families, you are thinking about how you will be able to soon serve many others.

2. Child Protection Policy (CPP) Comes First

If you intend, as you probably do, to offer classes or nursery care to families in your church, then you need a child protection policy. Get this in place first, even before you figure out what you will offer. Why? Because the child protection policy will help set safe boundaries on your plans for children's ministry. It will help you see the pros and cons and even "deal breakers" for having a nursery in a particular space or classes in another. A child protection policy protects children, their teachers, and really, your whole church. Child abuse not only scars children, it shuts down churches. Church plants are especially attractive targets to predators because they are often disorganized. This leaves the opportunity for abuse. Every state has its own set of particular policies. One of the best sources of help for you as you are setting up a CPP is a mega church in your state. This is because mega-churches have to get safety right. There are so many people involved. Obviously, you will take their ideas and then fit them to your much smaller situation, but at least you know what is important. Books like Deepak Reju's book "On Guard" can be helpful. Online services like "Ministry Safe" can be helpful in setting up training of workers and free up your very limited numbers of volunteer and staff.

3. Formal from the Start

It might feel kind of silly to have a formal CPP in place. And in some ways, just because you know each other so well, it might not seem necessary from that point. But the pastors I spoke with all said that one of the other reasons for having a CPP in place from the beginning, even if it seems sort of like play acting with a level of security that you don't really know because of your familiarity, is that it can get very difficult later on to add in the CPP when you start getting new member volunteers that nobody knows. Many pastors mentioned some of their charter members feeling insulted because suddenly they were being treated with a new level of security. They felt as if they were suddenly not trusted when the new, formal CPP was brought in. Better just to put in the formal CPP from the beginning and tell everybody you know it seems kind of awkward, but that you're doing it to have everything in place for one more volunteers for less well-known

come in. Help your charter members get behind you and the safety of the kids before they need to think about it. Help them see how this is yet another way they are serving the gospel by submitting themselves to the CPP. And setting their church up for good growth in the future.

4. Plan before You Go

As you know your fellow church-plant pioneers, your families and facilities, you can begin to see what the needs of your starting church families are, what you might be able to provide, and where in your facility you might provide for those. Survey or interview your charter team members and see what their experience is and how much time they might be able to give to children's ministry. Cast the vision for children's ministry as an extremely important way to serve the ministry of the Word to parents among them, and future families who come. Sometimes those without children don't understand how very significant this is to their church plant. Tie it to the gospel, as it should be. Also explain that the elders won't just be thinking about the families' spiritual health, but the volunteers' spiritual well-being, too. This means that the elders will only choose to offer families what is within limits that serve all. But, of course, the more who are willing to serve, the more the church can offer before they reach those limits. Willingness to serve in children's ministry is something to talk about with every charter member.

Find out how many children you have in each age group. Talk to your parents about what they would most like to have. All of these things will help you see your children's ministry "budget" and where it would be best to spend it. Make sure parents understand that this is a wish list that will help the elders to form a vision and a plan. This is also a good time to share with parents that offerings will be (typically) much less than they are used to. One pastor told me that 150 members is usually the threshold for a sustainable, full-ish children's ministry program. That may be a number nowhere close to where your charter membership stands. Patience and sacrifice will be needed.

5. Get Advice

Speak to other pastors who have church planted about how they planned for children's ministry. These interviews with pastors showed me how much great advice there is and how many problems you can avoid by others' experiences. If nothing else, the 9Marks network will list many church plants that you could contact for input. This may be one of your wisest moves.

6. Plan before You Need

Even after you have started meeting and made your initial plans for children's ministry, you will need to plan for what's next. As mentioned already, the very nature of a church plant is to grow. Growth inevitably brings new families and more children, whether through births among current members, or through visiting families. And even where there is not growth in member numbers, children are growing. And as children grow, the needs and the potential opportunities grow. So, even if at first you only have a few families with a few babies, and maybe a toddler or two, think ahead to what is around the corner.

Try to build a flexible children's ministry that allows you to accommodate that family with a 2nd grader who shows up, even though you only have preschoolers, and so forth. There are a number of curriculums and resources that can stretch to be used in a multi-age setting. Praise Factory, New City Catechism, Truth 78 are three that can be stretched. Praise Factory curriculum even has a Bits and Pieces section for every Bible Truth in which you can download just what you need: such as a story, a game and a take home/ coloring sheet. All three curriculum are created to stretch and reach a 4-6-year age span (Hide 'n' Seek Kids, preschoolers; Deep Down Detectives, preschool to early elementary; Praise Factory Investigators, K-5th grade). Some churches have even used the curriculum with adults because it presents theological concepts that are deep enough for adults, but simple enough for kids. New City Catechism would also be helpful like this, too. Very simple app.

But even something as simple as a solid Bible storybook that you add questions to that might reach younger children as well as older children is a possibility. If you have more money than teachers with this ability, then you might lean towards a curriculum that does this. If you have more teacher power than budget, you might choose something more basic and have them write in the questions to create your own curriculum as you go. Praise Factory offers a lot of games for preschoolers and elementary school age kids that can be used with any Bible verse or Bible story. You buy the simple props and put them in a container, and you are ready for any of the games. Every game uses a set of questions. These are ready-made in the curriculum. But, you can come up with your own questions and apply them to your lesson. The games are available for download through praisefactory.org in the resources section. They can be super helpful to add to a simple lesson to add reinforce while having fun. And, can mean you are ready with something that new, older child might enjoy, while still being accessible to the younger children.

7.9 Marks Matter, Even in Children's Ministry

Over and over the pastors I interviewed gave examples of how their view of the church made a difference in children's ministry.

Elders Lead the Way

While you most definitely want to seek out the advice of other churches and out the advice of members, families, gifted teachers within your church plant, you do NOT want them to take the lead. Elders need to lead the way. This was one of the most important points underscored over and over in the interviews. First, because pastors/elders are the overseers of all teaching. Children's ministry is an outflow of the responsibility God has given them. Secondly, because so much of your membership will be involved in children's ministry and the pastors need to care for the needs of all. They are in the best position to do that. Thirdly, because any changes or any issues that occur in children's ministry needs to be seen not as the work of those who carry out the vision, but of those who made the vision: the elders. And fourthly, because this puts everyone in children's ministry under the care and the authority of the elders/pastors. And fifthly, because where the gospel is preached, God is at work. Conversion comes. And with conversion, comes discipleship, baptism and membership. Pastors need to be the ones who decide how best to present the gospel with the children, and what the track of discipleship into membership looks like for children. This will be one of the thorniest issues, perhaps especially in America, that you will deal with, as the many pastors I spoke to can attest.

Expositional Preaching

Elders who preach expositionally feed and equip their church, their parents, for what God calls them to do. They might have little programmed children's ministry, but they know they are equipping the parents to be primary spiritual caregivers of their children. This is basic, biblical children's ministry. Knowing that the gathering is the main thing helped these men prioritize what kind of support programs they might offer and when to offer them. Such as, choosing to start with simple, child-care for parents with infants and toddlers so their parents can take part in the service, begins to make the most sense. Addressing children in the sermon or at least preaching from a simple outline made the sermon more accessible to them. Also, choosing to add a basic worship bulletin for preschoolers/elementary school age kids in the service is thinking of them, using the gathering, and keeping within the budget of very few volunteers at the outset. It will help you think through limits on serving during the service because you know your goal is for all to get as much as they can from the preaching. These are a few examples.

Gospel, Evangelism, Conversion, Discipleship, Membership, Church Discipline

These six all go together. They are the path from hearing the good news of Jesus to becoming a member. Usually, the children attending your church will be the majority of the non-Christians in your gathering on any given Sunday. As they are converted—or, as they or their parents think they are converted—pastors who have a clear view on the path to baptism, the Lord's Supper, Membership, and parents handing over final

authority to elders, if their child is a minor and seeks membership, is huge!!! One pastor I spoke to lost a significant number of members over the “watch and wait” approach to baptism/Lord’s Supper/membership. The pastors I interviewed said to make sure this topic is broached with prospective members to avoid such problems. In the classroom, it is so important for teachers to understand how the conversion of a child needs more time to bear mature fruit and to be careful how they word the gospel.

Sound Doctrine

Pastors overseeing the approval of curriculum and teachers have a powerful impact upon the teaching of sound doctrine to children. If you don’t take this lead, someone else will. And if you let someone else do it without your input, and they choose poorly, not only do you affect your children, but you are left with only a “reactive” response to the person who choose it. Far better to choose and develop regular feedback that guides and develops these well-meaning people. Keep them on your team and keep them fulfilling their desire to serve the church and the children.

8. Deacons Who Serve

In interview after interview, deacons were the godly, unsung heroes of children’s ministry. They had a level of godliness that showed itself in servant-like humility to carry out the pastors’ vision for children’s ministry. They exhibited a selfless love to serve the families of the church in tasks such as cleaning toys, setting up and prepping resources, recruiting volunteers, helping teachers have what they need to teach, and greeting and signing in families/children in a way that is welcoming and protects their safety. And frequently, the sound doctrine to help answer basic questions, train others, and to speak to the elders about any concerns they notice among the teachers. Many church planters said that these deacons/deaconesses were key to their children’s ministry. They also said that if you can have multiple deacons/deaconesses from the beginning and split the responsibilities among them that it will help them not burn out. And, make sure to have term limits for these servant-hearted men and women! Really, you want to be looking for their replacement to train and to mentor as soon as they take the job.

9. Give Clear Expectations Over and Over

I mentioned giving clear expectations for the mere presence of children’s ministry to your charter members from before you even launch. You will do well to continue to remind your members of this as you go. It’s one thing to acknowledge this before you start; or even to endure eagerly and bravely the first few months of much less children’s ministry that you had previously, but it can get wearisome as time goes on. You may need to remind yourself of this, too, as you feel the pressure to add more programs when you don’t really have the sustainable volunteers to do it. If you have your teaching priorities ordered and your volunteer limits agreed upon within your elder board, this can help you vision cast these to the congregation again and again. Make them a point of prayer. Ask God to bring you more teachers to grow to the next item on your teaching wish list. Explain to members it is an act of care for all when you tell them why such and such program can’t be added yet. Of course, always be open to change and advice. We do learn as we go on.

10. Start Small, Start Slow, Wait for Sustainable

Every pastor I spoke to gave this advice. The concern that a new family will come, and you don’t have what they want for their kids is a very common and real scenario. That’s why you need to think very strategically about what is best to offer, since you usually can’t offer everything from the beginning. That’s also why it’s good to choose a teaching program/curriculum that has that flexibility mentioned earlier, but also that you trust God! Care for who you have! He knows your limits. He will provide. Some men even said that when they explained to the new families why they didn’t have more (to care well for the whole membership) that was an attractive witness to them. It showed them good shepherding. Every church I interviewed had families come like that. Some did not stay. But every church has seen growth, nonetheless. You might wish you could have those families, but you do not want them if what you have will lead them to frustration over and over.

11. Use the Worship Gathering as Much as You Can

The main point is the gathering. In the beginning, it may be about all you have, in terms of equipping families. Make the most of it. Assess your space. Is there a place where you can put nursing moms where they can hear but have a bit of privacy, such as in the back of the room? Is there an area where you can have parents with babies or toddlers, so their extra noise doesn't distract so many? Can you make the upcoming sermon Bible passage available for parents to read and discuss with their children ahead of time, so they can all learn more from the preaching? Can you make the songs you regularly sing available for families to use with their children? Can you provide some kind of worship bulletin? Can you preach using simple points, simple illustration that kids can understand, or application to their lives? These are examples of ways you can use the gathering to equip parents and teach children, too. Not only do you want to make the most of the gathering because it's children's ministry that every church can do, but also because the gathering is where you want all to be. Even when you are established and have the luxury of any children's ministry program you desire, it still all needs to point to gathering everyone together to worship. It just can't hurt to make the most of the main thing!

12. Don't Ask Your Wife to Be in Charge of Children's Ministry (if at all possible)

Church-planting husband, it may be very tempting to ask your talented (or at least willing) wife to be in charge of children's ministry. Please do not make this mistake! Your family will be under enough pressure just supporting you in this new venture. You will need her to be a big part of that. No doubt if you have kids, your wife will be taking her turn serving with the children. But do NOT put her in charge. If she is gifted in thinking about children's ministry things, she could even be a helpful support to you and to those who are shaping the program.... but do NOT put her in charge!!!

Children's ministry, especially in church plants, is fully of neediness and sometimes grumbly people. Shield her from that. It will be enough to have her wise input as you sort through those people and issues. Better to launch later than to put her in that position.

13. Avoiding Burnout: Places Where You Visit, Places Where You Live

There is no doubt that a church plant is all about "all hands on deck." You will need everyone you have to be completely invested. In the early days especially, people may serve more frequently in children's ministry than they will a few years down the road when your church has (Lord willing) grown. But asking people to give so sacrificially should be a place where you "visit." In other words, for a time as you are getting started at the beginning. Or, at a time when you have just added in a new, additional program. It's ok to see those as times of increased expenditure of effort. But, those are not places where you live. Not places where you keep asking people to serve because it will turn into burnout. A church plant is a maiden voyage. You plan the best you can. Do not feel bad if you must reassess when one of those "places you thought you would only have to visit" turns into a "place where you live." More important to care for all well than to die on the hill of a children's ministry program that is too big.

14. Adding Something New? Find Some Load Bearers First

When you start a new program, find a few members who are willing to own it and put in the sacrificial hours needed to get it started. This will be getting to know the curriculum and training volunteers. It will be breaking the typical service limits for a while as they are on-hand to help others more than usual. As the program gets established and kinks worked out, then the load bearers work can move down to regular limits and simply glean feedback from teachers after class.

15. Youth and Youth Groups When You Have Hardly Any Youth

Youth groups are usually programs that come into their own as your congregation ages. Baby spring up and nursery care with them. But youth groups, most churches mature into them. A number of pastors told me how hard it was for their teenagers who had no youth group to be part of their church. Or, how at times they were frustrated when a family decided to leave to go to another church that had a youth group for their teen when the church plant didn't have anything. A number of pastor said that they were judgmental in their attitude and frustrated at the time. But, as their children became teenagers and still they didn't have a youth group at their church plant, they became more understanding. They could see how very helpful that extra support from godly youth group leaders can be as a another helpful, mentoring voice in their children's lives. And the huge blessing it was to have events that didn't look just like the world and didn't require sex or drugs or some ther kind of sinful behavior. A place where kids who felt the tug of the world and wanted to say "no" could meet and enjoy like-minded company. These pastors said they found great value in finding a youth group at another, like-minded church where their kids could be a part of. They encouraged pastors to be understanding as parents of teenagers find that need for their youth takes them away from your church. In time Lord willing your church will grow and you will have a flourishing youth group shaped and fed by the gospel. Here in CHBC it took about 20 years to get there!

16. Unexpected Group for Youth

But, on the other hand one pastor told me how even though their church had no youth group that they encouraged the youth to attend one of the regular, adult small groups. They were amazed at the wonderful fruit and new, unexpected friendships that resulted, particularly among one group of teenage girls who joined a women's small group. These girls were nurtured and encouraged by these older women and got to see godly examples of the Christian life in those decades ahead of them. The one pastor who told me about this said he was encouraged that the body can help strengthen each other even as regards to youth. Do not underestimate the value of these kind of groups or creative solutions. Isn't this just another beautiful picture of the body of Christ loving and learning from those different from themselves?

chapter 27

Church Plants in Missions Settings

Church plants in mission settings face the same sort of issues as mentioned above in church plants in your home country, except that now you add a new cross-cultural element. Here are some of the additional observations pastors in this setting shared with me.

1. You Bring Something with You

Church planters who go overseas bring with them their own church experiences from their own culture. It's important to identify those and realize when they are cultural elements and when they are biblical elements. Recognizing them can help you focus on using the cultural elements of the new culture that you are reaching on which to build your biblical foundation in this new setting.

2. Hold a Church Service Even if It's Just for Your Family

In some cultures, it may take a long time, even years, before you see your first national believer. Don't wait for new believers to regularly gather together for worship as a church, even if it's just your family. Those worship times hopefully one day WILL be something that includes new believers from the culture you're living in; but until then, you still are called to care for who you have, even if it's just you and your wife and your children, if you have them. For your and their sake, you need to be gathering together as a church. Hebrews 10:25 tells us not to neglect to gather together. In biblical times there was often very small churches in their first days. They didn't wait to gather. Neither should you. And don't just have a Bible study. Have a worship service! Include prayer, songs, Bible reading and preaching. Take the Lord's Supper. Preach the Bible, pray the Bible, sing the Bible, read the Bible, see the Bible. This is so important for your family or team families

3. Be Wise about Who to Teach

Recognize the authority system within the culture you are trying to reach in order to make the best decisions about when and who to baptize; and sometimes, when and who to teach. Some of the pastors I spoke with who were serving among unreached people groups found that it was important to understand the impact of the head of a authority group to begin learning how to read the Bible and becoming a Christian would have upon those under their authority.

For instance, one pastor told me that they learned that the young people work quicker to learn how to read and even to put their trust in Christ. But they learned they observed in the culture that to proceed ahead with the young people without waiting for the older adults was actually a hindrance to the older adults learning God's Word and (Lord willing) coming to faith in Christ, themselves. These pastors learned to focus on the adults first and watched the young people quickly learn how to read alongside their parents/adults. But this way, the adults remained in their position of respect and this was beneficial for this whole culture in receiving the gospel.

The same pastor also shared that when the head of a family became a Christian in the culture where he was serving, it was almost like a second thought that everyone else in his family should be known as Christians, whether they had saving faith or not. So, when it came to deciding who should be baptized, they had to very carefully discern whether a family member truly had become a Christian or whether they were following the cultural norm and switching over to a new religion of their father.

4. The Children of First Generation Christians

The pastors I spoke with said it was particularly difficult to help “first generation” believing parents know how to teach their children. This was because many times only one parent would become a believer. The believing parent and the missionaries had to balance the marital relationship with the biblical mandate to train up your children in the ways of the Lord. A lot depended upon how willing the other spouse was to allow their children to learn these new truths.

5. Older They Are, the Harder It Is

Related to this, the older the children were when their parents become Christians, the harder it was to teach their children the new way of life in Christ. The older we get, the more baggage we have. That baggage needs to be unpacked and replaced with training in gospel truth and living.

6. Parenting Gatherings

Even just basic parenting styles can need to change radically when parents become Christians. One pastor mentioned gathering together all the believers in the city or even region to talk about what Christian parenting looks like. This can be particularly helpful where there are small pockets of new believers scattered throughout the area in little churches. It was encouraging for these parents to meet each other and share their difficulties as well as their words of wisdom for each other.

7. Connecting Youth, Creating Christian Families

Some pastors helped link young adult believers across their city (and sometimes even across their region, so that they had a chance to meet other young, single Christians and find a believing spouse. Not only was this wonderful for these men and women, but it was also great for the church. Here were couples starting out fresh, working together to teach them how to train up their children because there was agreement within the marriage relationship.

8. Teaching Materials

Often there is very little curriculum available for use in the native language. Usually it will be one of the missionaries translating materials they have, or they write for use with these new believers. One pastor shared how he wrote his own catechism to use with new believing adults and kids, because of course, both parents and children were new to Bible truths. In this catechism, he included not just the standard questions and answers like we may think of in traditional catechisms, but cultural questions and answers as well. He did this because he wanted adults and children to remember what it looked like for a Christian to live out their faith in their culture. This is true of any culture to some extent, but cultures with little or no contact with Christianity especially need help learning what discipleship looks like in daily life. New believers can greatly benefit by learning simple questions and answers to help them in this new way of life practically.

9. Persecution

In countries where Christians are persecuted, this catechism included preparing adults and children for the reality of persecution and God’s faithfulness even in the midst of most difficult times.

10. Missionary Kids

A number of pastors mentioned that ministry to their own children was some of the most difficult children’s ministry they faced. Missionary kids often have a special set of needs that must be remembered and treated with care. These children take part in their parents’ decision to leave their home country and live in another country for the sake of a gospel. They face many sacrifices like their parents, but not with the same set of tools of maturity and often, without the same faith that motivates their parents from the heart. Life as a missionary family usually involves a lot of transiency, and transiency translates as loss. Even when families go home on furlough to the States, no longer does that home culture feel like their culture. They are caught between two worlds.

OTHER CHURCH SETTINGS: CHURCH PLANTS IN MISSIONS SETTINGS

Getting advice from older missionaries as to how they help their children deal with these challenges can be of great benefit. Also, having a State-side church that adopts these families as their own and welcomes them can provide more stability. One pastor also mentioned how very helpful it was for MK teenagers to have young, 20-something godly men and women come from home to help out for a few weeks, a month or longer. These interactions provide these MK youth with an opportunity to see other godly young men and women living their lives out for Christ. In the typical, isolated, small church plant situation, these kinds of role models are often very few indeed.

11. Help with Children's Ministry from Home

A number of the pastors mentioned how helpful it was when someone skilled in building a children's ministry program and or teaching children came for a month, three months or even a year to take charge of implementing the pastors' vision for children's ministry. And sometimes, for pastors with very little experience in thinking about children's ministry, this involved actually teaching the pastors how they can care well for children through children's ministry. The men I spoke to said this outside help made all the difference in helping them set up a nourishing, sustainable structure for the children and built confidence in the people who would teach.

12. Child Protection Policy

Because many of these little churches meet in homes, store fronts, hotels or other less optimal locations, a child protection policy can be very hard to enforce. Most churches that I interviewed simply did the best they could, given the circumstances where they gathered, always hoping and looking forward to a better location that could provide them the children with better protection.

Some decided to only have women serve with the children in these less than optimal settings because men typically are more likely to be predators than women. It was a way to offset the risk.

Pastors mentioned how very awkward it was even having a child protection policy in the early days of a very small church because of the formal treatment of people who knew each other so well. Some were offended, feeling that the policy made it seem like they were already under suspicion for being a predator. This is another reason to have a CPP in place from the very beginning and teaching people that this is a service of the gospel that requires humility but will be for the good of all even if it feels awkward at first.

13. Volunteers Being Well Fed

These little church plant can last for years and years before volunteer numbers can rise. Pastors must think very carefully about balancing the desire to have children's ministry available every worship service and making sure the volunteers are receiving the spiritual food that needs they need themselves. This might look like providing childcare only on certain Sundays. Or, providing less childcare for only your very youngest, most noisy, least attentive infants and toddlers, just so more people could be regularly fed in the service. Having a Sunday school class for kids that wasn't during the Sunday service Would allow people to help teach the children but without it interfering with them being spiritual fed spiritually fed in the worship service, themselves.

chapter 28

Church Revitalizations and Healthy Churches

Every church that is not a church plant is, in one sense, a church re-vitalization when a new pastor takes his vows. There is hardly a pastor who does not find something he wants to change or sees for improvement. The big difference in a church re-vitalization and a healthy church is felt in how change is viewed (attitude of trust or distrust among the members) and what structures (church covenant, statement of faith and constitution, elders and deacons, appointed like-minded helper staff and volunteers) are in place for pastors to lead that change.

Spectrum of Health

The difference between a healthy church and a revitalized church is where a church is in the process. In some churches, there may be only the senior pastor who has a vision for a healthy church. Next, he often helps this vision spread to the rest of the church leaders. With time, the biblicalness of these ideas become rooted in the congregation itself through the preaching of God's Word. Being a healthy church becomes a pastor-led ground swell that flows out to bless the whole membership and every area of the church's life. Once godly elders are in place and the church owns these ideas, it is much easier for those elders to make the changes that help the church become more healthy and stay that way. Healthiness in a church is something that comes slowly and must continue to be contended for. No "once and done" here. That's why it's helpful to talk about the healthy church and revitalized church together because really, the revitalized church is just a church a notch or two over on the healthy spectrum from an healthier one.

Patient Love

"He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young."—Isaiah 40:11

The first days of a new pastor at any church are mainly spent getting to know the members and loving them well. As he understands them more, he can feed them better on God's Word and gain their confidence that his affections and his actions are for their good. As he sees what needs to be changed, he slowly but surely teaches the congregation and helps them understand what biblically healthy church looks like and what it would look like for their church to adopt these truths. Ideally, these changes eventually take the form of a new/updated church constitution, statement of faith and covenant. They hopefully include recognizing a plurality of elders to lead the church; establishing clear, biblical guidelines for membership that express what it means to be a Christian, how to live as a Christian, and the promises members make to help each other be built up in Christ.

It may even take years to get to the point of this kind of healthy structure in a church revitalization, the pastors I interviewed told me. They said they spent a long time living out leadership where they were, with their churches in the shape that they were in. Things began to change as the members grew in trust and confidence in their leadership and through their preaching. As the church saw them act in wise, godly, and thoughtful ways that were for the best of the flock, this helped them have open ears to hear the new ideas the pastors were introducing. Eventually, this did lead to a new constitution and covenant. these pastors said. "Your example is a visual aid for the good leadership you hope to be able to provide to an even larger extent through a new covenant and or constitution," one man told me. "Because of course, it's not getting to a signed document and running with it. It's that by the church signing that document, they think it's true. The structure, the document, are symbols of the unity of heart. And that's why when you bring the congregation

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to the point of being in agreement with you c(oncerning the constitution and the covenant), you are in a stronger place for them to listen, accept and be on board to do things differently in children's ministry."

The pastors I spoke to said that the element of teaching to bring a congregation to a new place and leaving best you can where they are now is an extremely delicate dance. The footsteps of this dance fall across the whole church and most definitely, and sometimes most problematically, they affect or need to affect children's ministry, for the good of the children and for the good of the whole church.

Here are fifteen, important words of wisdom from the pastors in church revitalization situations regarding children's ministry.

#1: Start by Taking a Children's Ministry Physical

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Find out as much as possible about what is going on. But use your head! Find out what you can by detective work and with love, not with an Inquisition squad of doom!

Leadership:

- Who is providing oversight to Children's Ministry?
- Are they volunteer or paid?
- What leadership did the previous pastor give children's ministry?
- Do they have any oversight from the pastors? On what matters? How frequently?
- Does the CMD (Children's Ministry Director) have any assistants?
- Are there any deacons/deaconesses who help?
- Any other regular positions, such as hall monitors?

Philosophy and Vision:

- Who decides the philosophy of children's ministry?
- What is the philosophy?
- What is the understanding about childhood conversion and discipleship and membership?
- Does children's ministry see itself as carrying out the pastors' vision or their own vision?
- Is the emphasis on getting in as many participants as possible, on conversions, on teaching Bible truths, on safety, on equipping parents, etc.?
- Children's ministry seen as preparing children to gather with the congregation in worship?

Programs:

- What kind of programs are offered? When?
- Any programs that are in direct conflict with the gathering in the worship service?
- Are there any "alternate" church services offered for children and teens?
- Any special events, such as VBS, etc.?

Curriculum:

- What are they teaching?
- Who chooses curriculum?
- What do they look for in curriculum?
- Who chose what's in place now?
- What do they like or dislike about the curriculum?
- How sound is the curriculum?
- Do the curriculum have take-home sheet resources for parents?

Teachers:

- Who is teaching?
- Who recruits teachers?
- Are they regularly attending church?
- What is the teaching rotation schedule, if there is one?

Child Protection Policy:

- Is it in place? Is it enforced?
- Is it up to date?

Parents:

- Do parents know they are the primary spiritual caregivers for their children?
- Do many parents train their children in Bible truth at home?
- Do parents ever use catechisms?
- What are the trends in discipline among families?
- Are there any strongly held opinions within the congregation regards family and church, such as homeschoolers, family-integrated church, church's job to raise kids, baby dedications, young baptismal age, invitations, VBS conversions, etc.
- What is the typical family life during the week look like? What do priority is placed on spending time together?
- Do parents regularly encourage one another informally in conversation? In classes? In small groups?
- Does the church provide any training to help parents?

Gospel/Conversion:

- What is the typical gospel presentation like in the classroom? Among parents? Does it include repentance and a sense of discipleship?
- Is there a dichotomy being Jesus being Savior and Jesus being Lord?
- Do you have teachers rewarding children with candy when they pray a prayer in class?
- When do parents expect their confessing child to be baptized? Immediately? After showing fruit? Teenager? Etc.?
- Do kids ever get baptized and included in the church at programs outside of the regular church service and membership process (such as on retreats or camps)?
- What is the process of children becoming baptized? Take Lord's Supper? Become members? Has the church practiced some sort of associate membership for children/youth who have been baptized?
- Do kids take the Lord's Supper if they have been baptized?
- Has the church practiced much "re-baptism"/"re-dedication"?

Kids in the Gathering:

- At what age do kids typically join the worship service?
- Do you provide any classes or child care during the service?
- Are there any additional places for noisier, wigglier kids and their parents to be in the service but not distract?
- By what age are all kids in the service?
- Do you provide any worship bulletins or in other resources to help parents with their children in the pews?

Resources in Hands

- Do you have a library? What kinds of books are there? Sound, unsound? Parents? Kids?
- Do you have a bookstore? What kinds of books are there? Sound, unsound? Parents? Kids?

Facility:

- What shape are the facilities in?
- Are they safe for the kids?
- Are they adequate for current needs?
- Are they used by other programs, such as daycare or a school during the week? Does this cause any conflict? Are those other programs well-insured?

 **#2: What's the Heart of the Matter?** 

Another very important step is understanding how and why what is being done started being done in the first place. “Why are these teachers doing that? What’s the heart it’s coming from and what’s the misunderstanding it’s coming from? And where is the theology possibly that it’s coming from?”

Remember that chapter in church history? Remember the standard Sunday school movement and the revivals? Remember the curriculum that came out of that time? What some other reasons why teachers are doing what they’re doing? It may be as simply as because that is what they were brought up on: that same decisionistic, light-on theology, version of conversion they imbibed from the curriculum they use.

Have attendance and baptism numbers have been so stressed in the past that the teachers are happy to do things that encourage children towards (what appears to be) making a decision? Or, have teachers just been very poorly led in knowing how to effectively share the gospel with children? I know kids like candy, and adults like to reward kids for doing a good thing, but perhaps no one ever taught them that this might actually be hurting a child’s soul as well as bringing on a cavity.

It is so easy to see what someone is doing and assume that you understand why they’re doing it. And often, there can be many different reasons why someone is doing something. By taking time to find out where what they’re doing comes from will help you have a better gentler conversation and more effective conversation with the same people as you trying to teach them.

And remember that preaching can be a conversation you hold with your whole congregation. It may allow a teacher or parent to hear without feeling defensive. And, it may lead to the very one-on-one conversations you are hoping for. Many pastors said it was through the preaching of the Word generally that they laid the groundwork for these conversations to be effective when they spoke to individual teachers.

And pray. Do not underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit at work. If it is a very hard task to ask parents and children to wait to become members, it is also very hard for pastors to be asked to wait and be patient as the congregation comes to unity in understanding with them. There’s plenty of waiting to go around for everyone. No wonder patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit.

These sort of questions answers to these are the questions will help begin to paint a picture of what your families are doing, what their needs are, what the church is been doing to support the families, and what you can be encouraged as being done already and what you put on your wish list to be able to change an appropriate amount of time.

 **#3: The One Change that Can't Wait: The Child Protection Policy** 

Most things will need to change slowly, but one thing needs change immediately. The kids must be safe. The volunteers must be protected. Your church needs to be in forcing in keeping with your state’s requirements and insurance policy requirements for safe childcare.

Child protection policies that are a custom fit for your church take a while to create. Even so, as soon as you find out there is a childcare safety problem, there are basic guidelines that can be put in place immediately. From there, you can work your way to a custom child protection policy being written and implemented. Insist upon these changes. “Ministry Safe” is an organization that has online videos the churches can watch. Their training videos but they’re also videos that inform about the importance of a child protection policy.

Get the current children’s ministry leadership behind you on this issue as soon as possible. If they are sceptical, show them one of the Ministry Safe (or other child protection videos) that bring home the sobering need for a child protection policy. It can be very disturbing when you see the potential for child abuse inside of your church. If you can find out the shape and the regularity of enforcement of the child protection policy at the church before you get there, and get the leadership on board, it may be something that can be changed even before you were in the pulpit preaching your first sermon. One pastor I spoke to underscored this. He said as much as he did not like a particular curriculum being used because the teaching was rather moralistic, he felt that could wait (and of course, he would be clearly preaching the gospel from the pulpit, which would help immediately), but he absolutely could not wait to keep the children safe. He had to press in on that matter immediately, no matter how hard it would be.

#4: How to Introduce the Idea of Change

Many of the men I spoke to said that children’s ministry was one of the most difficult areas to introduce and implement change. That’s because churches typically have a lot of people who really care about children’s ministry, and many times they’ve been doing it the exact same way for a lot of years. There’s a real ownership to what they do. So, for you to come along and say they need to change what they’re doing because suddenly it’s not good enough or sound enough, can feel rather offensive. These pastors said it helped to remember the hearts of love that these workers have for the children. Many times these faithful servants were older women who have been teaching for years and giving their lives for the children, in the best way they knew how to. Remember this and make sure to show your appreciation for the love and for the gospel that they probably meant to be at heart of what they’ve have been doing for years.

Another common problem encountered by these pastors was a Children’s Ministry Director(CMD) who had been allowed to do whatever he/she wanted. One pastor told me the CMD said to him, “You run the church, we’ll run children’s ministry,” when he asked questions about the children’s programs. It makes it even harder when the person running children’s ministry is a woman. There are not many places in the church where women are given such leadership roles as in children’s ministry. It may be hard for some women to give up the exhilaration of autonomy. And how very hard it is for the male pastor to approach this woman and explain this isn’t male vs. female power struggle. This is placing her work under the care of pastors who are responsible before God for all of the teaching in the church. I personally have witnessed this very difficult dynamic in churches we have attended. Here at CHBC, the pastors chose the title Children’s Ministry Administrator, not Director, in order to clearly cast the role as a support role that listens to and carries out the godly vision for children’s ministry. The elders are actually the Children’s Ministry Directors.

Even if the conversations get difficult and children’s ministry leaders or volunteers respond with anger or hurtful words, these pastors said to still remember that the motives of these people are usually full of love, even as their words are full of anger. And, that many times they feel like they are being replaced or usurped. As an older woman, myself, now, I can understand better than ever that scary feeling of becoming obsolete. If you can find a way to encourage these servants about the wonderful things they have done and their years of service and bring them alongside with the good things you’re trying to do in this new way, the chances are a little higher that you will help them be part of the change.

#5: Focus on the Parents, Not the Structure as Change Agents

These pastors also said that rather than focusing on changing the structure, to instead, focus on talking to parents and preaching to the congregation about the sorts of things you're hoping to fill the children. This helps them become convinced of the good you want to do and makes it easier to see change as the natural out-working of achieving that good. This brings the church along with you and makes new changes and structure and curriculum more of a groundswell event, rather than a top down enforcement.

One pastor told me he knew of bad teaching going on in some of the kids' classes. He decided preach truth from the pulpit that would counteract this teaching in the class. After awhile, the parents recognized the teaching was bad. They actually went to him and asked him to please change what's going on in that class, so that their children can have a good teaching that is in keeping with his sound preaching. That is a perfect example of this idea/approach.

#6: Baptism, Lord's Supper and Membership

Perhaps nowhere does things in children's ministry get more difficult than when you are talking about conversion, baptism, Lord's Supper, and membership. In many church revitalization situations, teachers and parents (and even previous pastors) do not think about tying baptism and Lord's Supper to membership and church discipline. Instead, they often tied baptism and Lord's Supper to a profession of faith, which may or may not be conversion. So, if a young child "prays a prayer," they are pronounced converted. Soon afterwards follows baptism without further questions. And with baptism comes taking the Lord's Supper. In these cases membership as seen as a separate addition what a child reach adulthood.

Unanimously, the pastors I spoke to agreed that children can be converted at an early age. But they also agreed that it is prudent, given the nature of children to be developmentally in process, to wait until they are at least in their teens to be considered for baptism. At this age, they are better able to understand what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. They felt this was more in keeping with the biblical model of making disciples. This saves baptism and taking the Lord's Supper for a point in life in which a person can clearly enunciate to the elders and to the congregation the story of their changed life. They have become known generally known among the church membership as a Christian, and are ready to submit themselves to the elders' leadership. These pastors felt it was important to also help parents realize that their children, as a baptized member of the church, would be under the authority of the elders and the discipline on the church primarily; under their parents' authority, only secondarily.

This approach of "patient waiting, watching and encouraging" is almost always new and difficult for families used to linking baptism with any profession of faith. Parents either think that you are saying that children are not converted, cannot be converted, or, at very least you are being unbiblically, overly cautious by waiting. Sometimes, actually many times, the real issue maybe the parents want a sign from the church that their child is really saved. Yes, perhaps parents know baptism does not save, but it sure does look like it must really be conversion, if the pastor is baptizing their child.

One pastor I spoke to quoted some horrifying statistics from a 10 year period in Southern Baptist history a few decades ago in which was tracked the number the percentage of teenagers who left the church after having been baptized as children. 80% of those baptized had left! During this same period in the same churches, 33% of adult baptisms were actually re-baptisms because the adults decided they weren't really Christians when they were baptized as children. Assurance through early baptism helps no parent or child, and it certainly does nothing for the purity of the church either.

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However, helping parents accept a new “watch, wait and encourage” baptism- membership connection can be a slow process. What helped the most? Conversations with parents and teaching from the pulpit, the pastors told me. Most of them also said that they did not set a specific age for baptism, but they did set in place a clear (and slow) track to baptism, Lord’s Supper, and membership that was clearly more appropriate for someone who was at least a teenager.

Almost all the pastors said that it was easily to bring the congregation along with them after establishing an elder board and that leadership coming to a baptism position they could agree upon. They all stressed how important it was to share these views on baptism in the prospective membership classes and again in the membership interviews, so that no one would not be surprised. Most every church lost prospective members as well as current members over this issue. One church even had to excommunicate a 17-year-old baptized member who subsequently did not live as a Christian and would not repent of his sin after repeated teaching and urgings.

🌀 #7: Baby Dedications 🌀

Tied very closely with the early baptism mindset was baby dedications. Pastors told me that these need to be handled with at least as much sensitivity as the child baptisms. Parents love to bring their babies in front of the church and have them dedicated to the Lord. Unfortunately, some parents put too much stock in this action in terms of the possibility of whether a child will become a Christian in the future or not. Or, they just love the ceremony baby brought up front and praying for him or her. And those who have relatives from a paedo-Baptist background may actually be confused when they see baptistic churches hold these dedications.

A number of pastors told me how they handled de-valuing and diminishing baby dedications. They moved them from prominence in the Sunday morning service to a special evening service. They asked parents who wanted their babies dedicated to first come to a special meeting to prepare them for the dedication. In that special class, he taught them what a baby dedication is and is it not: it IS a time of prayer for you to train up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It IS a time for those present to pray and promise to help you do that. It is a chance to pray for your child’s conversion, but it adds no special “value” to them besides that. These pastors told me that the teaching time was helpful for the parents and it certainly diminished the number of parents desiring to dedicate their child.

🌀 #8: Adding Volunteer Limits: How and Why 🌀

It’s not unusual for many revitalization churches to have people who have served for years and years and children’s ministry. It’s not unusual for these people to rarely or if ever go to church. Pastors care for teachers and nursery workers by making sure that they do not over serve in a way that is detrimental to their own spiritual growth. A pattern of serving week after week after week and not attending the service is definitely a pattern that is detrimental to our volunteers’ spiritual health. Limits placed on volunteers help make sure volunteers feed their own souls.

Some volunteers are relieved to embrace the finiteness of their terms of service with the kids. These are the ones who will go to church when given the chance. These are the ones who might quit teaching children’s ministry because they get burnt out. And these are the ones that you want to keep teaching because they understand they need to be fed before they are in a position to feed others, even if the others are children.

But as I mentioned above, there are those others where service to the church in nursery or teaching is almost an excuse to avoid going to church and having their souls fed. These teachers are the ones that complain when you bring limits to their service. These are the ones who often leave the church because they can’t serve

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as much as they want to; and, they show that they don't really have an interest in the church as a body or in growing in the world themselves. These are the teachers that you don't want to be teaching your children. They are not growing themselves and don't seem to want to put themselves in a position to grow. It brings to question whether they are converted themselves, sadly.

Putting limits of service in place often brings to light a teacher's desire for the Word and God's people. And, it provides you with a natural way to bring relief to those who seek it. And, it provides a natural way to remove from the classroom teachers who do not. It may be the very act they need that helps them re-consider the state of their heart in a way that may actually lead to their salvation.

#9: Beefing Up a Child Protection Policy

The pastors I interviewed said that most churches had some form of a CPP in place already when they came to the church. However, most said, especially in very small churches, that it either was not a very full body CPP or not very well enforced. Everybody knew each other and they were sort of lax about it because of the familiarity. Many pastors said how difficult it was to begin to enforce the CPP more rigorously and conscientiously. Especially when beefing up a CPP meant enforcing couples not serving together alone in the same class. Over and over, that particular addition to a CPP, which is very necessary, was one that insulted volunteers. Again, it probably is better to start with a training video and that shows the dangers of abuse, combined with talk from the pastor sympathizing with the awkwardness of this change. You aren't making this change because you're suddenly suspicious of the volunteers who are helping now, but because when new volunteers come in who you don't know, the church is set up to keep the children safe. Help them see again it's part of loving one another in a way that feels costly. The more that you can underscore that this is not because you suddenly became suspicious of them, the better chance it is of this being well received. A number of pastors said that they did lose husband and wife volunteers over the specific CPP policy. It's hard to lose anybody who will volunteer with children's ministry. And I have yet to meet a pastor who says, "We're good we don't need any more volunteers. And if anything, we're asking people to serve less." Most every church needs more volunteers. But just like every other part of the revitalize church, you have the previous pastor's church—the one that is there when you come. And bit by bit, you will have your church—the one that reflects your teaching, leadership and vision. There's going to be changes on the way and not everyone's going to like them as much as you would love for everyone to receive things and stay, if they can't receive things and cheerfully stay, then sadly you need to wish them well and let them go. It will be hard in the short term, but it will be better in the long term. You will look back on those days and you will be grateful for where you are with the team that you have who is uniform and unified and is keeping the kids safe.

#10: Bringing in New Curriculum

Bringing a new curriculum is another place the children's ministry can ruffle a lot of feathers. Some pastors found it better to leave moralistic teaching in place a little bit longer than they would like (and preach clearly from the pulpit) in order to give the teachers time to be well fed under good preaching, learn sound doctrine, and begin to see for themselves that the curriculum should be changed. Others found that as they added new classes, they could more easily introduce new curriculum into those classes. Then gradually as the older teachers retired, they filled those classes also with the new curriculum, too. Obviously, we want the best curriculum going into those little children as soon as possible. But it all goes back up to the point to loving them tenderly and being patient balanced with getting it on right at first. No two pastors approached the need for new curriculum the same way. And that goes to show how much nuance and knowledge of your congregation needs to go into how and when you change curriculum.

🌀 #11: Youth 🌀

As difficult as kids in children's ministry may be, many pastors who had church is large enough to have a youth group, found a youth group almost issues perhaps even more difficult than the younger kids' issues. Youth group was difficult for a number of reasons.

Excitement to Keep Them Coming Back

Parents may force their little kids to go to Sunday school, but by the time those kids become teenagers, it becomes much more of a fight to get unwilling teens to go to church, let alone youth group. Teenagers can be much slower to do something just to please their parents. They are affected so much more by what their peers think or what they've come to value themselves. They are becoming their own persons fully.

It is extremely tempting in the world of youth ministry to make things exciting and fun like the world to get them to come to church. This is also why many churches have a separate youth church service tailored especially to youth culture. While we definitely want to scheme and use activities that youth like as vehicles for the gospel; but unfortunately, the gospel gets left out of the vehicle and youth never get to smell the aroma of Christ in a church service or in a simple Bible study. There is a lot of pressure on pastors to keep these events coming. And it's not the kids, but the worried parents of kids that are often those putting on the most pressure.

The pastors I spoke to said that having conversations with parents rather than taking an ax to these programs was the more effective way to both convey love, =to convey the importance of the gospel, and to bring good changes. Gradually parents came to see the fruit from Bible studies that looked boring, actually produced a far deeper impact on their teens.

Hardest of all, the pastors told me, as making changes when there was an event-driving youth pastor in place. Until he can be on board or until he leaves it can be very difficult to see changes. But the process of getting him to leave was often very stormy.

"If they are not Christians by the time they're 18 then they're probably not going to become a Christian." This is a very common quote even today in many churches in the South. This is another reason why parents get so desperate to do whatever is needed to get their kids to church. Again, teaching from the pulpit of God's ability to convert anyone and comforting parents with those truths is a slow but necessary way to contend with this life.

Youth Camps

"Decisionistic" youth camps are very popular. In these mountaintop experiences, some teenagers hear the gospel and truly are converted. Sometimes they are simply swept up in the emotion of the moment or in the actions of their peers. It is not usual for leaders at these camps (or the youth pastors who take the kids to the camp) decide to immediately baptize all who have made a profession of faith, not seeing the importance of baptism being tied to membership or the need to give a confession time to bear fruit of repentance consistently life before someone is baptized—especially if that someone is a minor.

One pastor told me that he urged parents and camp staff not to do this, but if it were to be done, in order for it to "count" as part of the process towards membership, a video would need to be taken off the baptism, and the teenager would know that when he or she got back, he would need to go through membership classes, an interview with an elder, as well as give their testimony at church. He told me that these steps helped to limit these on-the-spot baptisms, and were a beginning down the road to them not happening at all.

Baptizing Them into the Church or Out of the Church?

Many parents are hopeful that their kids will be baptized before they go off to college. Often, it's not so much wanting them to leave under the care of the church, but actually as a sentimental act which will tie them in their memory to this church even as they go off. Some called this "baptizing them out of the church" instead of "baptizing them into the church," which means they're planning to stay at the church and be a member. In cases like this, some pastors encouraged the parents to wait and have their kids go off to college and choose to go to church and be baptized as a part of that church there is better for their youth spiritual oversight as well as a clear act of personal conviction stemming from conversion.

Embarrassment

Especially in the American South, being called a Christian is very much to be a part of the culture. It's almost synonymous with being a good person. In these churches, parents can be embarrassed because it that seems that their child wasn't raised in a good Christian home, if their child has not been baptized. Having conversation and preaching on conversion and waiting for its fruit helps to slowly bring about this new, more biblical way of thinking about conversion.

🌀 #12: Pastors' Kids 🌀

Nowhere is it more difficult to be a parent who wants to give their child or teenager time to make a true conversion of their own than with pastors' kids. Again, particularly in the South, where there's so much culture that says, "If you're Christian, your child should be a Christian," The pastors and their kids may understand why they are waiting, but there is so much pressure upon them and comments to have their kids show up as spiritual successes by being baptized. This takes a lot of prayer and a lot of support for your kids.

🌀 #13: New Wine Skins for New Wine 🌀

A number of pastors sent their children's ministry director to a like-minded children's ministry conference, such as the one Truth 78 puts on or that we put on here at CHBC. Sometimes going away and hearing from other people the same kind of things you're trying to convey can make the new vision you bring less personal. It can help them catch the vision for what you are trying to do and received such great practical help in understanding how to do it.

🌀 #14: Like-Minded Leaders 🌀

Looking for or bringing in new like-minded leaders or teachers to help put legs to your vision can be a huge help. Sometimes, you can bring the old leaders along by helping them catch the new vision. But sometimes it's just too big of a leap for them and they choose to retire. New leaders give you an opportunity to unify the vision and multiply your eyes of care for all of those who are serving or taking part in children's ministry.

🌀 #15: Burn-out Alert 🌀

Many pastors said that Children's Ministry Directors often left of their own accord because of burnt out. A Children's Ministry Director (CMA) that last more than a few years is a very rare bird. So, while you want to care well for your Children's Ministry Director, if even if you do, chances are they will be leaving soon. This is very hard when you have a good partnership. But, when that shared vision is missing, the open position will give you an opportunity to bring in somebody more like minded. Make sure to treat your Children's Ministry Administrator well with regular meetings, talking not just about what is going on in children's ministry, but about how they are bearing up under the load. If you want to keep them longer, you need to provide them with more help, whether that be deacon/deaconesses, team leaders to take charge or different program, or other volunteers/even paid assistants as you are able. And, always be on the lookout for someone to be mentored by your CMA, so that your CMA can have regular vacations while they are on staff. Or as a possible replacement when current CMA retires. Many pastors said they really had no idea how very taxing it was to oversee children's ministry and wished they had brought more assistants alongside their CMA sooner.