

Part V

Comments
from
Pastors

Straight from the Horse's Mouth

In this section, I've grouped the background information that I used to describe the church settings in the previous section.

I certainly learned a lot by grouping everyone's comments by category, since you can begin to see patterns across every church type. I hope you find their responses helpful to you as you think through children's ministry in your pastoral setting.



chapter 29 Leadership and Volunteer Positions



These the leadership structure that the pastors I interviewed either had, or desired and were working towards. The descriptions summarize the general consensus of the duties of each in this structure.

“Pastors/Elders Lead Children’s Ministry”

- They equip the congregation, including parents and children, through the preaching of God’s Word.
- They love the members under their care and pray for their well-being.
- They desire to provide support for parents through children’s ministry, yet protect the worship gathering, knowing it to be of primary importance.
- They encourage the church membership to help each another in raising the children in their midst through their words and their acts of service.
- They provide pastor oversight of families, programs and children’s ministry volunteers.
- These men are called by God to be the vision-casters and shepherds of children’s ministry, its doctrine and practices.
- They lead by providing teaching priorities; approving program and curriculum choices, and, by setting healthy limits on volunteering.
- They protect children of volunteers through a child protection policy.
- They encourage, advise, support parents, teachers, and the children’s ministry team.
- They hold regular meetings with the children’s ministry leaders to best care for all involved.
- They care that the gospel is clearly preaching and that those who profess Christ as Savior are disciplined.
- They make decisions about the prudent age for baptism, partaking of the Lord’s Supper and membership. They lead the membership classes and interview all who are considering membership. They speak with parents who have questions about the baptism of their children.

☞ “One Pastor/Elder with Special Oversight of Children’s Ministry” ☞

Often, one of the pastors/elders were given special oversight of children’s ministry. This was most commonly an Associate Pastor.

- This man is responsible for keeping in regular contact with any children’s ministry leaders and with knowing what was going on in the programs. Ideally, he meets with the children’s ministry administrator in person or via email/phone every week.
- He reports back to the rest of the elders with updates and bringing to their attention any issues that needed discussing more broadly.
- He is directly involved with formulating and updating the Child Protection Policy.
- He is the pastor/elder most directly involved in recommending deaconess and children’s ministry leadership personnel.
- He helps with any initial curriculum choices, program needs, and teacher changes.
- Is the first pastor to deal with any concerns over curriculum that he either addresses himself or takes back to all the pastors/elders for their consideration.
- He may help recruit volunteers, particularly men volunteers to serve in children’s ministry.
- He may help teach parenting or children’s classes. He may help train teachers.
- He is on hand to help with any difficult issues with parents, children and teachers.
- He has many of the conversations with parents concerning their children.
- He sometimes faces being over-worked or neglecting children’s ministry needs by not having enough paid or volunteer help to implement the regular needs of children’s ministry; or, because he has been given other large concerns of the church to oversee as well. Give this man some deacons and deaconesses!

“Children’s Ministry Administrator/Director”

Most churches had underneath this pastor/elder, a Children’s Ministry Administrator or Director. This person, sometimes a man, but often a woman, is directly responsible for the carrying out of the pastors’/elders’ vision, including:

- screening and approving volunteers for service in children’s ministry
- overseeing scheduling
- curriculum preparations
- keeping classrooms safe and clean
- coordinating training of volunteers
- communicating with the pastors/elders
- communicating with parents
- communicating with deacons/deaconesses and any other leaders/support volunteers

Sometimes this person is an unpaid volunteer. Many times, as the church budget allows, this is a paid, full-time or part-time staff person.

The elders at CHBC personally choose the title of Administrator over Director, helping the very title of the position be a reminder that this person’s primary job is to carry out the vision of the elders, not to make elder-like decisions themselves.

☞ “Deacons and Deaconesses of Children’s Ministry” ☞

Under the CMA, are often deacons/deaconesses who are recognized by the church to share the load of children’s ministry.

- Many times, these deacons/deaconesses are assigned a particular area of focus, such as training or recruiting volunteers, or prepping classrooms.
- They are especially on hand on Sundays, aiding the needs of teachers, parents and children.
- They usually supervise the signing in and out of children from any Children’s Ministry classes.
- These servants also report back to the CMA any situations that need further attention, such as difficulties with children, teachers and parents, or more practical issues related to the classrooms, the child protection policy or classroom material needs.

Some members of churches being re-vitalized find the idea of “deaconess” very difficult for the church to understand. These churches usually have been using the title “deacon” to be used for non-pastor elders. And indeed, if deaconess was being used with that connotation, they would be correct to object. However, when elders are called elders, then that frees up the word “deacon” and “deaconess” to be understood in its biblical context. This is a position of service to the physical needs of the church under the leadership of the elders.

Coming to this biblical understanding of deacon/deaconess can take a long time in such churches. These pastors have found it is best to treat the members with patience, gentleness and clear, biblical teaching. And, while the title may not be used, pastors can still help the church recognize and appoint such men and women to the positions the title describes.

☞ “Prep Volunteers” ☞

- These are other volunteers who do not spend time in a classroom with kids.
- They usually don’t do their work on Sundays, but ahead of time, in preparation for Sundays.
- They prep the classroom, such as cleaning toys or refilling supplies.
- They prep the materials a teacher will use, such as photocopying or cutting out crafts.
- They are support workers to the CMA or the deacon/deaconesses.

☞ “Hall Monitors” ☞

Hall Monitors are (male) volunteers who patrol the childcare areas and public spaces in the church to ensure the physical safety of the children. Hall Monitors may be called upon to help with child evacuation and emergency response to unauthorized persons in childcare areas. They often use walkie-talkies to keep in contact with teachers and the deacon/deaconesses on duty.

☞ “Volunteer Caregivers and Teachers” ☞

Team Captains/Coaches: Teachers who oversee the other teachers serving alongside them in a class or childcare. They help new teachers get acclimated and provide hands-on training.

Caregivers: Nursery workers (no curriculum) for children age 2 and below.

Sunday School Teachers: Teachers who teach in a time other than during the worship service, usually before the morning service.

Worship Service Teachers: Teachers who teach during part or all of the worship service.

Class Assistants: Volunteers who serve alongside a teacher. They do not have teaching responsibility but are simply there to be an extra set of hands to help the teacher.



chapter 30 Equipping Parents and Children Through the Church Worship Gathering



The basic, biblical model of children's ministry is equipping God's people through the worship gathering. I asked the pastors how they did this in their churches.

❧ "Equipping with Worship Bulletins" ❧

- Truth: 78 Worship Books
- Weekly, customized worship sheets based on the actual worship service.
- Points of the outline typed in.
- Made a sermon grid for the kids to fill in during the service.
- Words to listen for in the service/sermon.
- Favorite song and why.
- Plain paper with writing supplies. Kids asked to draw a picture of something from the service and give it to the pastor after the service. He put up the pictures in the church office each week.
- Basket with crayons and sermon note sheets
- Activity bag with worship sheet and writing supplies, not all items necessarily related to the service, but would keep the kids occupied.
- Provide children with a special notebook. Kids were told to go tell a (non-family) member something they learned in the service and got a sticker. When they accumulate 12 stickers, and they got a little prize. The idea is to help the children listen, AND, to makes connections with other members in church at the same time.
- One worship bulletin for pre-school aged children and one for elementary/middle school kids.

“Equipping Through Songs”

- Encourage parents to take home the bulletins with the songs in them to teach at home to their kids.
- Have links to mp3's of the songs on your church's website for them to access at home.
- Introduce the songs during Sunday School to familiarize children with the words and the melody; even take time to explain words like “grace.”
- Worship leader takes time to explain the key meaning or a key Bible word (like “sin” or “grace” before the congregation sings a song to help kids connect.
- Choose at least one song with simple melody and lyrics for children to easily learn.
- Introduce, then repeat a song or two for a few weeks in a row so that parents and children have a chance to be familiar with it.

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“Equipping Through Preaching”

- Include children and parents in your sermon application grid.
- Frame at least one illustration in a way that is accessible to children.
- Use a simple, clear outline. Children will at least be able to follow that. Try to keep giving them the big picture of God’s plan, and the gospel.
- Aim for simple, relatable, robust preaching that all might hear and learn
- Sermon writing pitched at a sharp 16-year old is a good level to feed most everyone something, even the youngest.
- Regularly address the kids in the sermon: some said weekly, others monthly, others, whenever the text points to it.
- Give the kids something to ask their parents after the worship service.
- Address children at least once in every sermon, even have guest preachers do this.
- Preach gospel clearly and simply every sermon, realizing that every service, the kids, if no one else, will be in need of responding to it themselves.
- Try to engage the kids even if they don’t look like they are listening. They usually are hearing more than you think.
- Ask for kids’ feedback during some point of the sermon.
- Read resources like “Parenting in the Pew” (Robbie Castleman) and “Children and the Worship Service” (Sally Michaels, Truth 78). You can get wonderful ideas for how to help those parents with their children in your pews each week.

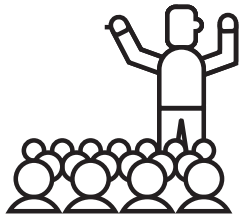
☞ “Other Worship Gathering Advice” ☞

- It may seem hard to have younger children in service, but give them time and they learn.
- Look at the Truth:78 materials on children and the worship service. And at Parenting in the Pew by Robbie Castleman.
- The regulative principle (Sing the Bible, read the Bible, preach the Bible, see the Bible, pray the Bible) is multi-sensory in a way that can help kids learn.
- Small Church Planters: No matter how small you are, be a church with your family. Start out as you intend to go.
- Always address the 4-5-year olds at the beginning of the service. Have them raise their hands to identify themselves at the beginning encourages them.
- Acknowledge the children’s presence in the service in some way each time.
- The younger the children, the more careful you need to be about sensitive topics. This is an adverse effect on kids and making things more difficult for parents. Tell parents ahead of time; or, set up a evening service address/Sunday school address, etc. where you talk about these things with kids not present.
- Provide a “wiggly room” with video feed.

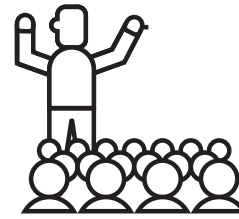
☞ “Most Common Programs Outside the Worship Gathering” ☞

In additional to child care (no teaching), many churches offered a few other programs, as volunteer numbers allowed.

- Sunday School was the number one program offered outside of the worship gathering.
- Youth group (usually on non-Sundays) was the second program most commonly offered.
- Some also had Sunday evening programs.
- Some had AWANAS, such as on a Wednesday night.



chapter 31 Who's in the Worship Gathering?



All the pastors I spoke with understood the worship gathering to be the “main thing” that they wanted all members and their children to be a part of eventually. They also understood that providing childcare and even some classes for children during all or part of the worship service was a very helpful support for equipping parents as well as preparing the children to gather. Here’s who they included in their services and what they provided for those not in the services.

“0-2 Year Olds”

- Most churches provided childcare for this age group. They saw this as being the top priority for children’s ministry: providing an opportunity for parents to be better equipped to turn around and train up their children. If they could provide only one thing it would be this.
- Some only provided for 6 months to 2 because so many parents kept their babies with them anyway; and, typically, these smallest infants are fairly sleepy and quiet still.

“3 Year Olds”

- Some provided childcare, some teaching for these children during the whole service.
- A few included 3-year olds in part or all of the service.

“4 Year Olds”

- Often at this age, churches chose to include children in the whole worship service, or at least up to the sermon before going to a special class of their own.
- Some provided childcare (no teaching for this age group, usually due to small childcare area that was suitable for just one group of 0-4 year olds, making teaching not possible).

☞ “3-5 Year Old Preschoolers as a Group” ☞

- Some provided them teaching through the whole service. Some during the sermon only.
- Many grouped this age range together for teaching that did occur.
- Others split the 3 year olds off from the 4-5 year olds.

☞ “5-8 Year Olds” ☞

- This group was fairly evenly split between having them in the whole service or in up to the sermon, providing them with teaching.

☞ “9 Year Old and Up” ☞

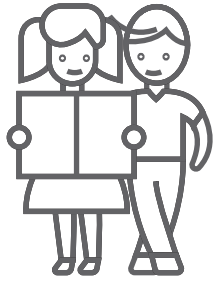
- This group was almost unanimously in the whole service.

☞ “UK Model: Ages 0-11” ☞

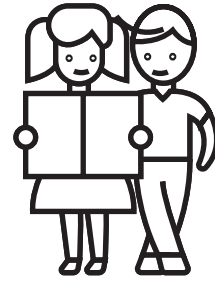
- Sunday School held during sermon portion of the service.
- 0-2 year old “creche” childcare usually provided for the entire service.

☞ “Making Changes to the Stove-Pipe Model” ☞

- Many pastors of larger, re-vitalized churches found that the children and even youth attended for their own, special, “whistles and bells” service, with no intention of bring them into the main, worship gathering.
- These extra services were extremely popular, and they had to act very slowly and carefully to correct this “stovepipe” mentality to worship.
- These pastors who encountered these programs all said that they have been slowly shaving off the maximum age for these services, gradually joining the youth/children into the service.
- They also worked to shape what happened during these services.
- Some also proclaimed 5th Sundays or summer or Christmas, etc. special Sundays where everyone would join together and there would be none of these “alternative” services held.



chapter 32 Curriculum



Most of the curriculum used by the churches I interviewed was created by churches that they knew and trusted. Gospel Project was the major exception to this, but its content was derived from pastors.

“Curriculum Used”

- Children Desiring God/Truth 78
- Generations of Grace
- Gospel Project
- Grace to You curriculum
- Long Story Short, etc Machiowski
- Praise Factory
- Treasuring Christ
- Writing their own curriculum in house

“Other Materials Used”

- New City Catechism
- Reading from a Storybook Bible
- Inductive Bible Study
- Based off of their own church service worship bulletin

❧ “Choosing and Using Curriculum” ❧

Most of the pastors I spoke to followed a version of the following process:

- The elders chose a few curriculums that they were familiar with from previous use or by recommendation.
- They checked the curriculum for soundness, then usually passed it off to a knowledgeable team of members/ teachers for their opinion for what might work best at their church, given volunteer, space, budget, etc. constraints.
- The elders and curriculum team met together and came up with the best decision. Teachers were designated to begin to customize the curriculum to fit them.
- These teachers remained the “load bearers” who invested in teacher training and extra time in the classroom to help the adjustment.
- After time, these load bearers would be in the class less and provide mainly feedback and incidental adjustments.



chapter 33 Child Protection Policy



Here is what the pastors said about how they developed, implemented and continue to update the child protection policy at their church.

“When They Created It”

- **Church Plants:** before they had their first service.
- **Overseas Family “House Churches”:** as they added other families. First, more informal; then beefed up as they grew. (less than ideal).
- Most church planters could not underscore highly enough the importance of having this in place before they offered any childcare.
- **Church Re-vitalizations:** All the pastors I interviewed said there was some sort of CCP in place when they became pastor. However, some were not very stringent or not very enforced. They said while other children’s ministry changes could wait, this is the one that could not. Absolutely not.

“How They Created It”

- One of the elders took charge of the CPP and the background checks and application process.
- Committee led by elder and including other members to draw it up initially. Then went to all the elders for their approval.
- CPP’s have special guidelines, state by state. Many reached out to mega churches in their state for best examples and then adapted it.
- Looked at Deepak Reju’s book, On Guard, for ideas.
- Got ideas from other churches of the same size and facility type as theirs.

“When They Updated It”

- Update every 1-3 years as laws steadily change.
- Regularly updated and re-visited as growth/building/etc. classes occurred. Every change requires a re-visit to assure you are keeping everyone safe.

 **“Typical Volunteer Approval Process”** 

1. Must be a member 3-6 months before they can serve.
2. Application with references
3. Background check. References checked.
4. Ministry Safe Online basic training videos that include a quiz
5. Child Care Training Class offered during Sunday School hour or after church
6. Interview with potential volunteer to decide where to put them.
7. Put them in a serving potential with other, more experienced volunteers to allow new volunteers to learn, and to provide a watchful eye on the new volunteers' interaction with the kids.



“CPP Sticky Points”



- Start with formal guidelines in place as tempting (and unnecessary) it may feel to go with casual. It is very hard to go from “casual” to formal later because some members get offended, feeling like you are suddenly suspicious of their behavior. Tell the volunteers that it's good for visitors and to be ready as the church grows. Make it a service-oriented thing, not a “we don't trust you” thing. It may feel like “play acting” asking parents to officially sign their children in and out or for teachers to make sure to keep classroom policies, but it's for the gospel.
- Can be hard to enforce a CPP because some “cowboy” teachers either forget or choose Moving away from couples not serving on their own together. Many lost volunteers over this. some of the old volunteers because of this.



chapter 34 Recruiting Volunteers



Here are the various ways volunteers are being recruited in the churches I interviewed:

1. Pastors/Elders/Deacon of Children's Ministry Contacting Prospective Men Volunteers

It's true. There's often a lot more women serving in children's ministry than men. But men can have such a big impact on kids! Having the pastor/elders/or deacon of children's ministry speak to men helps to get other men to volunteer.

2. Member's Meetings

Many pastors recruit members for children's ministry during the children's ministry report in the members' meeting. This is a great time to let the congregation know what opportunities there are to serve as well as share fruit from what is happening already.

3. Announcements

Announcements at the beginning of a worship service for more children's ministry volunteers were common. Some churches even choose an especially eager member volunteer to stand up and share their experience and plug working with the kids.

4. Deaconess/CMA Speaking to Prospective Volunteers

Often is it one of these people who speak to new members about serving in children's ministry. Some larger churches used computer software that would automatically send an alert to the new member and the CMA about who has become eligible to ask. This is especially helpful for churches who have a waiting period. Easy to forget to see who can be newly recruited with so many other needs to be tended to.

5. Oversized Teams

Recruiting in "over-sized" teams that use volunteers on a rotation basis frees up teachers to not teach every week and this makes teaching more appealing.

6. Mentors

Offering skiddish volunteers the opportunity to be an assistant under a more experienced teacher helps them grow in confidence in the classroom. It can make the difference between someone choosing to serve or not.

7. Separate Recruiter for Nursery and for Teaching Classes

Nursery and classes where teaching takes place uses two different kinds of volunteers. Having a separate recruiter for each group helps lighten the load and protects from burnout.

8. "Class Closed" Signs

CPP and insurance companies place limits on child to teacher ratios. If a classroom exceeds these limits, then it must be shut to additional children. Unless, another teacher is willing to step in for that particular Sunday or join the class teaching team. Some churches put a notice on the door that shuts the class, but provides a number to call/place to go to offer to be an additional teacher to the class. The class can then be given approval to open and receive more kids until the new allowable number of children is reached.

9. “We will shut down” Warnings

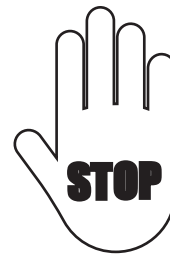
Sometimes there is a ebb in volunteers and a program is becoming unsustainable. The Pastor shares with the congregation about the need and the possibility of having to shut down the program until volunteer numbers make it sustainable again. This warning is made for a few weeks, if possible. Sometimes the additional volunteers are recruited and sometimes a program does get shut down temporarily or permanently.

☞ “Teaching from the Pulpit” ☞

- Childcare is ministry to the parents.
- Make stewarding/equipping parents (not so much the kids) your emphasis. Kids can be wiggly and seem unappreciative. If a volunteer thinks only about the “satisfaction quotient” from serving in class on a particular day, it can be discouraging. But even when the kids seem unresponsive, volunteers can know they are helping the parents to be equipped nonetheless. And THAT will help the kids learn about God, too, as their parents have more to give their children and have been strengthened to keep on living for God, themselves.
- Children are the church of tomorrow. Childhood is a rich time for conversion. There are more non-Christians in the kids’ classes than anywhere else in a church usually. Children’s ministry is a rich, gospel opportunity.
- If you want to be a teacher/pastor/elder, start with the kids. If you can teach them well, you will be better able to teach adults well, too.
- Among family-integrated church families, there can be a decided push back against not only them serving and their children participating in children’s ministry, but an attitude that is not charitable towards others who do volunteer/participate in children’s ministry. Pastors said it was important to teach the difference between essentials and distinctives and showing charity to those who think differently from you. And, to emphasize that children’s ministry does not have to a usurping of parenting authority but a very natural and even good way that the members of a local church help equip each other as the Bible clearly tells us to do. The idea is being a family EQUIPPING church. Not a family INTEGRATED church. Unless, of course, you are talking about the family of God, the church.
- Pastors can teach about children’s ministry being a way to serve especially the mothers in the church. Singles, couples without children, older members can serve the mothers (and fathers) who tirelessly serve little people all week to have a chance to learn and grow from God’s Word. It is easy for those without children to take the opinion that “it’s their kids, they should take care of them themselves” when it comes to children’s ministry. Pastors can motivate these others to an act of service in keeping with the church covenant to help each other bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord those under their care. This is vow to help each other... even with kids!



chapter 35 Teacher Service Limits



All of the pastors were concerned that member volunteers not to miss too much of the worship gathering. They also wanted volunteers to serve regularly, but less frequently, so that they might have more volunteers with longevity of service.

Here are the common service terms in use:

☞ “Childcare (No Teaching)” ☞

- Once a month (most common)
- Every six weeks
- Every 4 weeks, would like it to be every other month.

☞ “Sunday School (teaching, but not missing the worship gathering)” ☞

- Every other week, because so few able to teach.
- No more than once a month.
- Teach the same Sunday each month.
- Special teachers who just teach 5th Sunday.
- 8-12 weeks rotations of two teams A B AB.
- Teach for two, non-consecutive months of the year, a month at a time.
- Only Women. Once every 5 weeks.
- 2 weeks on, 1 month off—serve every 6 weeks.

☞ “Church Service Programs (miss all or part of worship gathering)” ☞

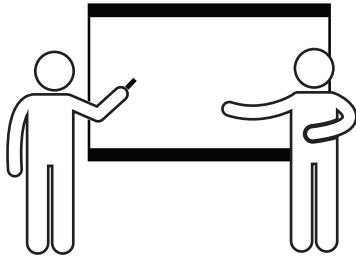
- Decide by interview because still need so many volunteers, when reach critical mass, will establish. Influx and outflux of families in transient area make it hard to get there.
- Every other week, because so few able to teach.
- No more than once a month.
- Teach the same Sunday each month, special teachers who just teach 5th Sunday.
- Teach for two or three, non-consecutive months of the year, a month at a time.
- serve a 8-12 week Sunday School term that lines up with an adult Sunday School course.
- Once every six weeks/only women; all women; hard even those who don't feel qualified because church is so small need them.
- 2 weeks, every three months on teams that wear t-shirts; add in predictable schedule to help transitions between teams.
- Use team captains to help teachers.
- Teach 6 weeks straight, once a year. That's the lead teachers, plus they have various assistant volunteers who serve 1-2 times a month. This allows for training and observation.



“Custom Service Terms”

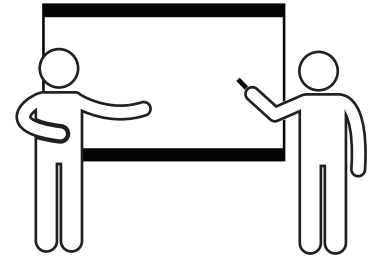


- In one, small church, the pastors/elders have annual checkup with every member and see how they are doing. They might add or remove, increase or decrease from volunteer service etc. based on spiritual needs.
- They take into consideration many different aspects of each person's life: evangelism, family, devotion life, personal struggles, church life. Decide to change, add more, do less depending on how the individual is doing. Critical mass for a small church is 150. Under that amount it is hard to cover all the “needs” of childcare.
- This is a small church. They need as much help as they can get, but we still want to care well for everyone. That's why they decide case by case, how frequently its ok to serve.



chapter 36

Teacher Training



The churches to whom I spoke, trained their teachers in some combination of these ways:

1. Mentor Teachers

Pairing new teachers with more experienced teachers allows them to see a teaching model before they start teaching themselves. It allows them to try out teaching before committing to a class. As new teachers watch more experienced teachers, they can become familiarized with the curriculum and with effective teaching skills. This brings both greater continuity to the classroom and greater success among new teachers, which in turn helps the children learn.

2. Model Teach

A seasoned teacher walks the teachers through lesson preparation before class, then has them watch him/her teach the lesson. Afterwards, they talk about what went well and what could have gone better. This give-and-take of loving criticism fosters an atmosphere of humility and teachability as well as helps everyone to become better teachers. As teachers (and perhaps even more importantly as fellow believers in community together), it is important to model soliciting, giving and receiving this kind of healthy criticism.

3. Observe and Encourage Teachers

Watch and give helpful feedback that will make for a teaching and learning. Usually, this is something a CMA might offer a teacher who is feeling unsure of themselves or a situation with a child. It's not something forced on them, like the secret police and a surveillance camera.

4. Teacher-friendly Curriculum and Classroom Behavior Tips

One of the considerations in choosing curriculum that the pastors' mentioned was "how well does it fit our teachers and kids?" They might have loved a curriculum on paper, but it was not a good fit for who they had. Others mentioned the importance of helping their teachers in managing a classroom. Even if the content is great, if the kids can't be controlled, the teacher will become frustrated.

5. Annual Training Sessions

Most churches hold an annual training session of some sorts for their teachers. Some separated out training sessions for preschool teachers, from elementary school teachers, from middle school and high school, given the many developmental differences involved.

6. Over-sized Team Teaching

This was already mentioned earlier. But to review, recruiting teams of teachers bigger than need to be on hand each Sunday allows you to pair more experienced with less experienced teachers. And, keep teachers fresh, since they know they don't have to teach every week.

7. Teacher with Assistant

Some churches would recruit teachers separate from assistants. A teacher might be asked to serve for a whole month, but have a different assistant helping him/her each week. This not only allowed for more people to volunteer with less frequency and spread the load, but also gives lots of prospective teachers to assist and get a feel for teaching. This can be a great way to make a good fit between teacher and class as assistants find where they most comfortably can serve.

8. Observe Another Church Using the Same Curriculum

Many churches benefit from shadowing another church using the same curriculum as them. They can see it come to life and more easily see how they might want to adapt it for their use.

9. Observe Another Church Like Them

Some churches found another church of the same type as theirs and went to observe how they taught their children. This can be so useful for churches in unusual facilities, like schools, hotels or homes that have to think creatively in terms of teaching space as well as CPP safety.

10. Go to a Conference

Truth:78 holds a comprehensive conference each year that is a great help to many CMAs', deacons and teachers. Covers a wide variety of topics. Capitol Hill Baptist Church (Praise Factory) holds three workshops a year to talk about children's ministry issues and see the curriculum in practice.

"A Few More Teacher Training Tips"

- Don't just row out a new curriculum and think that's going to fix all your problems. Every curriculum has to be fit to you. And will frequently require re-fitting as you change.
- Pastors, speak with your teachers and check up on them. You are responsible for the teaching of God's Word. Touch base with your teachers to whom you are entrusting the children.
- Visit or even teach in the classes once a year. The kids LOVE having the pastor spend that time with them. It also can be a great way to see what is going on in the classroom.
- Don't underestimate the impact of the witness of a teacher's simple kindness and care upon children. It's easy to emphasize safety, then cross right over to the importance of teaching, completely by-passing the powerful witness of another adult Christian's love and attention in class can have upon the kids. And on the flip side, an attitude of "I don't really care" or "I'm just here because I have to serve" or unkindness can negatively impact children. Encourage teachers to simply love the kids.



chapter 37

Teaching Teachers about the Gospel, Conversion and Discipleship



In addition to wanting volunteers to be trained in the curriculum and safe childcare practices, the pastors I spoke with said how important it was to train the teachers about how to talk to children about the gospel, conversion and discipleship.

☞ “What Pastors Found upon Arriving at Their Church” ☞

- A number of those who came to a church re-vitalization situation mentioned how some teachers used a simple “pray a prayer” and pronounced a child saved approach.
- Some of these teachers even rewarded the child – in front of other children in class—a piece of candy or other reward.
- These were also the churches who had typically passed the children over to the pastor (and sometimes their fathers!) for baptism.
- Then, years later, all too frequently these kids either left the church or asked to be “re-baptized” as adults because they later realized that they weren’t really converted at that earlier point.

☞ “The Gospel Taught” ☞

- Providing a good, gospel resource for teachers and parents to hear and begin to own as they teach the children. Some pastors thought highly of “Who Will Be King” by Matthias Media, as well as “This Is the Gospel” put out by She Reads Truth.
- Other great resources on sharing the gospel with children to give teachers and parents are: “Helping Children Understand the Gospel.1” by Sally Michaels; and “Your Child’s Profession of Faith” by Gunderson.
- Double check any curriculum used for how the gospel is presented. Teachers typically will assume that the gospel is presented well if it’s in print. Sometimes this is not the case. If it turns out this is the case, and you decide to keep the curriculum, provide teachers with a better version of the gospel.
- Making sure to help them understand the good news is for those who REPENT and believe.
- Regularly sharing the gospel with the children---even every week.
- Train parents and teachers on the developmental differences of children which mean that it is prudent for a child to mature into their teenage years at least before making a public profession of faith, for the child’s good and for the good of the church.
- Remember that most of the non-Christians in a church plant or overseas plant are the kids of the Christians present. Address them if they are in your service.

🌀 “Gospel and Praying the Prayer” 🌀

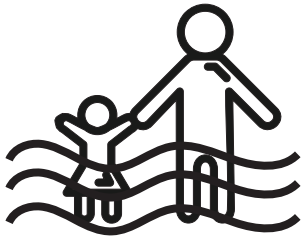
- Make sure the gospel is presented clearly, but without forcing a prayer. Always encourage children to ask God to work in their hearts and help them repent of their sins and trust in Jesus!
- If you do pray with a child about conversion, do NOT make a PRONOUNCEMENT about their salvation. Instead, rejoice with them and POINT them to the next steps in discipleship of continuing to seek God and ask Him for His help to live for Him each day.
- To speak to parents about any prayer or conversation teachers have with the child regarding the gospel.
- To encourage parents to speak to one of the pastors/elders about their child for wisdom about what to do.

🌀 “Gospel Rewards and Pressures” 🌀

- Do not let any prizes be given out to children who pray to receive Christ.
- Do not even hold up the child seeking to receive Christ as an example for the rest of the class, as a incentive to earn the praise of the teacher. You can ask the class to join you in praying for this child and for the rest of the children in the class, if this child expresses a desire to repent and believe in class. This is a good thing to do. It gives the praise to God while also holding out to all in the class that this is a free gift from God that He can give them, too.
- Debunk the idea, so prevalent, that “If your child isn’t saved by the age of eighteen, he/she is not going to be saved. This puts a lot of pressure to “force” a conversion. Teach on God’s ability to convert adults! You will need to preach this over and over and over, especially if you are in the South.

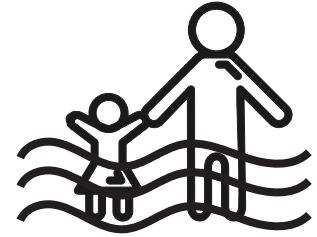
🌀 “Gospel Presumptions in Materials” 🌀

- Check the curriculum for language that presumes that children have already heard and accepted the gospel. This is incredibly prevalent.
- Also check any Bibles you use with the kids or recommend parents use with their kids. Most all of the kids’ study Bibles or devotional Bibles heavily presume conversion. Do not cloud the gospel with a false assumption.
- Many Christian books, even by very reputable publishing houses, are written in such a way as to presume a child is a Christian already. Continue to use these good books, but with discernment. If it holds out promises that belong only to believers, then add the gospel so children can know how these promises can be true for them.



chapter 38

Baptism and Children



This, of course, leads directly into the issue of baptizing children. By far, this was where the pastors I spoke to had experienced the most difficulty within children's ministry, especially in church re-vitalization settings. Here's what they had to say:

☞ “What Pastors Found upon Arriving at Their Church” ☞

- If child is considered a Christian, his/her parents decide when appropriate to be baptized, but not considered members until 18.
- Parents could allow their kids to take the Lord's Supper even if not baptized.
- Some practiced an “open table”, i.e., “If you love Jesus, then take Lord's Supper.”
- At another church, parents decided when kids would be baptized, not elders or church or kids. Kids were then baptized by their fathers!
- Kids 10 and younger were regularly baptized.
- Pressure from pastors on children's ministry leaders and teachers to fill a quota of baptisms for good statistics.
- Youth being baptized at camps, then welcomed into membership with no further conversation.

☞ “Tying Baptism to Membership Instead of Conversion” ☞

- Matthew 28 is Jesus’ command to the disciples to build His church. How? By making disciples, teaching them to obey and baptizing them. The disciples did this and churches were the response. Believers who were baptized gathered and joined together as a local church, committed to submitting themselves to the authority and preaching of their pastors/elders and committed to taking care of each others’ needs. These are actions of membership, not an intermediary step.

☞ “Age of Baptism” ☞

- Only a few churches had a set, minimum age for baptism of 13. These tell parents to not even ask until the child reaches the age of 13-16. Everyone else, put a process in place that would certainly more suit the maturity of a teenager.
- Those who did not give an age cut-off said that usually teenagers 15 years or older would be most likely candidates to pursue baptism and membership.
- Usually this was a long process. The long process helped to slow down and allow time for the child to mature. And, any child that continued to persevere was showing signs of true conversion by the very act of persevering.
- Pastors said they would be more likely to baptize a younger-aged child from non-Christian/difficult life situation because they had already so clearly felt the tug and said no. But even in these cases, they would rather wait until youth because of the weight of responsibility of membership.
- Regardless of age, pastors did not want to baptize youth right before going to college. They called this “baptizing out of the church” instead of “baptizing into the church.” This was frequently the desire of parents who almost out of sentimentality wanted their teens to be baptized before going to college. Pastors suggested these college students to pursue being baptized and becoming a member at a church in their college town, instead.

☞ “Who Needs to Be Aware of the Elders’ Position on Baptism?” ☞

- Everyone, but especially parents and teachers of children! Ahead of time!

☞ “Process of a Child Being Baptized and Becoming a Member” ☞

- Not unusual for parents, with or without their child, seek the baptism of their child who have made a confession of faith.
- Tell the parents (or the child, if with them) that they need to call to make an appointment to speak to the pastor, just like everyone else who wants to be baptized.
- The child should come alone to this meeting. This is the first step in showing that they realize this is their own decision and this is a very sober and mature decision.
- Have the child through a book on the gospel or discipleship (What is the Gospel? Greg Gilbert; The Walk by Stephen Smallman were books mentioned) with a non-family member. Again, the non-family member part is important because baptism ties a believer directly into the body of Christ and under the authority of the elders. Anyone being baptized needs to be known broadly among the other members as a Christian. They will be making covenant promises to love and care for one another.
- Child attends membership classes on his/her own.
- Membership interview would take place.
- Pastor has important conversation with parent making sure they understand that if their child is baptized and brought into membership then he/she comes primarily under the authority of the church and secondarily under their authority. If necessary, they will love their child through church discipline, if needed. If parents do not want this, then the child should wait until he/she is 18. If can't practice membership discipline, shouldn't baptize.
- Child would stand up before congregation and give testimony, just like any other prospective member to be baptized.

☞ “When to Teach on Baptism of Children” ☞

- From the pulpit in context of preaching on baptism in its biblical context, such as Matthew 28. The connection between conversion and membership is the big teaching point.
- In the process/after the church ratifies a constitution and a statement of faith that has clear membership guidelines.
- Bring up elders' position on baptism of children in members' classes and membership interviews. This allows prospective parents to be aware of the policy before they join.

“Baptism of Youth at Camps or Other Non-Church Events”

- A number of pastors stepping into a church needing re-vitalizing found the youth culture and youth pastors to have their own separate universe from the rest of the church. Not only did this show up in a separate church service just for youth, and sometimes led by youth (whether known as Christians or not), but also in matters of baptism. It was very popular for youth to be saved at camps or on retreats and youth pastors or camp staff to baptize the kids immediately. They return home from their experience, assuming that the church would also accept what happened at camp as a replacement for what would have taken place at church.
- I discussed this already on page --- but it’s worth re-writing here how this issue was addressed by one pastor: “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. “

“What to Say to Children about Baptism”

- One pastor’s words to his young son who wanted to be baptized, “Son, you are an American and I am an American. But if there’s a war, I have to fight; you don’t. Being baptized is similar to that. You may be a Christian every bit as much as I am, but you are not ready for the responsibilities that come with membership yet. When you are old enough, then you can pursue baptism and membership. Until then, I know it’s hard, but keep growing in Jesus and He will be making you ready for that day.”
- The elders feel it is best for you to mature in the faith before you make this very adult decision. Once you are baptized and become a member, you will agree to submit yourself to the elders. Sometimes they will ask you to trust them with matters you don’t completely understand. Being patient and waiting cheerfully to be baptized might be something you don’t completely understand. This can be the first of many times when you trust your elders and obey.
- If they ask to be baptized, tell them to call the church office and make an appointment to speak to one of the pastors about church membership. Let them feel this weight.
- Hold a special class for youth who are interested in baptism, etc that helps them think through membership, etc.

☞ “What to Say to Parents about Baptism” ☞

- Waiting on baptism does not mean we do not think children in general, or your child in particular, can-not be saved.
- Children go through developmental stages that allow their confession to ripen from heart, to mind, to will. When a child is a youth, he is in a better place to understand the commitment he is making, taking a stance against the world and for Christ. Waiting is for the good of the child, as well as the good of the church.
- Baptism is not a matter of salvation. It is, however, the public sign of repentance and faith in Christ for life made as a person is publicly committing themselves to a local body of believers, as the apostles did. Baptism is tied to church membership.
- Matthew 28 speaks of making disciples, which assumes it takes time, even for adults; especially for children.
- Expressing the serious tone of membership when talking to parents helps them understand the soberness of baptism.
- Sharing facts like these: 30% of adults baptized in a number of SBC churches polled over ten years had been baptized formerly as a child once. (i.e., they decided that baptism wasn't really baptism because they weren't really converted then.) And, 80% of kids baptized in those same SBC churches during that period walked away from the church as adults. Better to wait for the kids' sake and the church's sake.
- If parents want their child baptized, one pastor would hold a special meeting on a Wednesday night once a year. He tells the parents to come and hear a talk first. He explains about the development stages of children, how kids can respond to please others, how baptism is tied to membership and children will come under the elders' authority, kids must attend membership classes and must read testimony etc. like every other prospective member. Most parents decide not to press their young child

“Congregational Responses to the “Watch and Wait” View of Baptism”

- Hardest for those who had been at the church before the pastor came. Some churches lost members over this matter.
- Hardest for pastors who gradually brought consensus about the elders, then began to enforce it. The transition was not without bumps.
- Very helpful when the position was explained in the membership classes.
- Easier for the new members who joined after the policy was in place.
- Better when pastors took time to speak to parents, sometimes multiple times on the reasoning behind their position and the good they desire for the child.
- The passage of time helped as children who initially wanted to be baptized later lost interest in being a Christian; while others, continued to grow and show interest and were baptized as young adults. The congregation could begin to see the wisdom.
- Better when pastors underscored that they are not saying the child is not a Christian, but is waiting for maturity to assume the responsibilities of membership that come with baptism.
- At one church, a 17-year one member was warned about his unrepentant sin repeatedly, then excommunicated. This is so difficult, but can be great at reminding other parents how seriously you view anyone’s membership vows—youth or not.

“Tricky Bits: Previously Baptized Children”

- A common issue with military families who come and go to many churches and their children have been baptized at other churches.
- Hardest cases are those kids already baptized in another church. Should they continue to take Lord’s Supper or not?
- Most pastors spoke to these families and explained the seriousness of membership and the tie of baptism to membership. Some families chose to not have their child to take the Lord’s Supper and wait until they were older and were ready to pursue membership.
- Some pastors, after speaking to the child and the parents, and seemed fairly convinced of the child’s conversion, allowed them to continue to take the Lord’s Supper until they were old enough to pursue membership, or until the age of 18, whichever came first. At that time, if the child (now adult) did not pursue membership, he should refrain from taking the Lord’s Supper until a time when he could do so.

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“Tricky Bits: Fencing the Table”

- Fence the table, but parents/families do what they are going to do. Some ignore your preaching and the position. Especially difficult in larger churches.
- Some pastors and parents found it very difficult withholding the Lord’s Supper from someone who may be a true believer.
- “Douglas Wilson” influenced homeschool families who see the father as the priest of the home have been found to be stubbornly “uncompliant” to the elders’ /church’s position. They think their view on what is timely for their children in terms of baptism, etc. trumps the elders’ decision for the church. Pray for these families and for your elders to have wisdom in combatting the effect of this mindset within the church.

☞ “Tricky Bits: Pastors’ Kids” ☞

- Pastors’ kids! These kids (and their parents) can feel such a lot of pressure to be publicly recognized as Christians. It’s almost as if some members think whatever soup the pastor is cooking up isn’t working if his kids aren’t Christians. A number of pastors, especially with churches in the South, received lots of comments... and so did their kids about when they would be getting baptized. Be kind and encouraging to these kids! Help shield them from these pressures and help them to come to a point of decision themselves. Receive the comments other members make with grace and use their words as an opportunity to teach them (again?) about conversion being a work of the Holy Spirit, even in pastors’ kids!

☞ “Tricky Bits: Not Evangelistic” ☞

- Some pastors had families who left the church because they said it wasn’t committed to child evangelism because of delayed age of baptism.
- Other families said that they thought this indicated that the elders’/church did not think children could be converted.
- Avoid congregational strife by introducing the baptism position early on in the membership classes and teaching fully so they can (more likely) understand.

☞ “Tricky Bits: Baby Dedications” ☞

- Some families still (perhaps unconsciously) view this action as having a special, significance in the future of their child becoming a Christian, more than other prayers for the child at other times. This can be heightened by extended family members from a paedo-baptistic (and especially Catholic) backgrou. Help families see that any such dedciation is more about parents and the congregation keeping their covenant vows to help each other raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It has no special spiritual significance. Helps to move these out of the high-profile morning service and to a special evening service.
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- The pastors I spoke to frequently encountered baby dedications upon arrival at their church, but gently and slowly down-played their significance and worked towards

“Tricky Bits: Understanding the Role of Culture in Missions Settings”

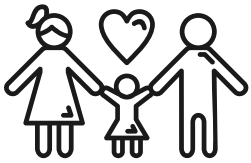
- Unreached people groups coming to faith: a number of pastors told me how important it is, in these cultures completely new to Christianity, to understand how authority structures impact pressures to be baptized. In cultures where whatever the father does, the children and wife must follow suit, it can be very difficult to immediately discern whether a child or wife is truly converted or whether they are saying they are, just because their father has become a Christian. In these cultures, it is more important than ever to teach fathers not to put pressure on their children and to wait for fruit before baptizing. This is just one example of how it helps to understand the culture in order to understand who should be baptized, when.

“Helpful Bible Passages”

- Matthew 28 speaks of making disciples, which assumes it takes time, even for adults; especially for children.
- Possibly Galatians 4:1-2. Analogous idea. As long as a child is an heir/slave he is under guardianship, but when is an adult, receives his inheritance. Both child and adult are heirs. Only the adult receives the inheritance.
- 1 Corinthians 14:20 Another illustration of a child’s thinking not being mature.
- 1 Corinthians 11:27 “Do not eat or drink in an unworthy manner.”
- John 9/Matthew 2
- 1 Peter 3:21
- Luke 14

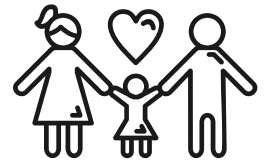
“Helpful Resources”

- Understanding Baptism, Bobby Jamieson
- CHBC Elders’ Baptism of Children Statement, Appendix A
- 3rd Avenue Baptist Church (Louisville, KY): Childhood Baptism and Membership
- Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology, John Hammett



chapter 39

Parents Training Up Their Children



I asked the pastors if they thought their parents knew they were the primary, spiritual caregivers of their children. And, if they did, what did that look like at church and at home. Did parents feel equipped for their task and were many trying to do some to train up their children.

“Parents as Primary Spiritual Care-Givers”

- Most pastors felt that their parents now know they are the primary disciplers of their children.
- Most of the re-vitalize church pastors felt that a lot of the parents, when they took the pulpit at their church, did not realize this. Many parents saw it as their role to be “good Christians” but the church’s role to educate the kids. (Thank you, Sunday School movement! Not!)
- Parents with very young children in the congregation tended to feel a lot of insecurity about what/when/how they are to train their children and often unsure who to ask.
- Parents who were new Christians particularly needed help in understanding this role and what they can do.
- Preaching from the pulpit was the main way these pastors began to educate parents in their role.

“Parenting in the Worship Gathering”

- Many parents make use of the worship bulletins the church prepared.
- Some parents brought their own resources for their kids.
- The resources used at church were more likely to be used at home for an over-lunch discussion.
- Some parents were helped by resources like “Parenting in the Pew” (Robbie Castleman) and “Children and the Worship Service” (Sally Michaels, Truth 78)
- Pastors read through resources like these and handed them out as free book give aways. They gleaned ideas themselves for how to help parents and children as they lead the service and preached.
- Reading the sermon passage ahead of time (at home) helps kids to attend better during the service.

🌀 “Spiritual Training at Home: How Parents Feel” 🌀

- “Most understand, about 50% do anything” and “Majority know; most feel pretty helpless” were the two most common answers pastors gave me concerning parents training their children at home.
- Many noted there was so much guilt and comparison, especially among mothers.
- Mommy blogs put a lot of pressure on women to be super moms, but not necessarily super focused on regular devotions and family times in the midst of trying to achieve so much elsewhere (big birthday parties, every sport, music and dance activity, etc.)
- Need help with bitesize pieces of Bible truths and understanding what kids are like and how to do it.

🌀 “What Families Do at Home: Bring Home from Church” 🌀

- Reading through the sermon passage the week before the sermon and discussing it each night.
- Using the worship bulletin and singing songs from it in the week after the service.
- Reviewing the sermon or what was learned in Bible classes.
- Use Praise Factory take-home sheets, stories and music available for free download off of the praisefactory.org website.
- Praying through the prayer requests from Sunday.
- Praying through the membership directory.

🌀 “What Families Do at Home: Start Their Own Study” 🌀

- Reading through a book of the Bible, little section at a time, and having the kids (starting with the youngest) make some comment from the passage. Continue all the way through the kids by age, then to the parents and end with prayer.
- Read the Proverbs or the Psalms, one chapter per day.
- Have an inductive Bible study.
- Use a family devotional book.
- Read through a Bible storybook together.

🌀 “What Families Do at Home: Sing!” 🌀

- Sing, meditate and discuss the words to a hymn and it’s application for our lives.
- Listen to Christian music and sing along.

🌀 “What Families Do at Home: Memorize” 🌀

- New City Catechism app
- Other catechisms.
- Bible verses. Fighter Verses (Truth:78) can be especially good for this.
- Teach them the gospel.

🌀 “What Families Do at Home: Pray” 🌀

- Read a Bible verse/passage and come up with an A,C,T,S (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) from it.
- Share about their day and pray for each other and others.

🌀 “What Families Do at Home: Listen and Discuss” 🌀

- Read through Christian biography or fiction together and discuss it.
- Watch a thought-provoking movie together and discuss it.
- Talk about the news. Discuss and pray about it.

🌀 “What Families Do at Home: Disciple” 🌀

- Help their children who profess Christ to begin to have their own devotions.
- Speak to these children about how to respond to life with love and faith in God and love and kindness to others.

☞ “What Families Do at Home: Learn along the Way” ☞

- Listen in the car to Christian music or a Christian book.
- Acts of kindness and service to others in need.
- Talk about what they see as they go places together. Pointing out God’s beauty or discussing situations they see.
- Share about their lives as they go places together.

☞ “What Families Do at Home: Lives that Reflect and Train” ☞

- Enjoying their children and loving them.
- Setting and keeping priorities and commitments.
- Live out their lives before their children, seeking to love God and love others as He desires.
- Provide a godly example of what it means to be a husband and father, wife and mother.
- Discipline their children with tenderness, wisdom and consistency.
- Respond to the world with a Christian worldview and discuss it with their children.
- Helping their children to grow in character.
- Helping their children to be thoughtful and servant-hearted towards others.
- Educating their children and preparing them to be adults.

☞ “Parents Equipped at Church: Preaching” ☞

- Remember: the preaching of the Word is equipping parents as well as instructing children!
- Pastor said he regularly addresses people in church by name, including families and kids. He found that this helps kids and parents feel like he cares about them.

🌀 “Parents Equipped at Church: Books” 🌀

- Pastor book give aways from the pulpit
- Church Library
- Church Bookstall
- Reviews of good books in the church newsletter
- Once a year bookfair of great Christian books
- Booklist of great books (put on church website)
- Harder to help parents if you are in a culture that doesn't like to read much. In these cases, it will be largely up to the pastor to verbally teach the parents and to “hand feed” them from the pulpit. Sometimes, however, you can help these parents along by reaching the kids with book giveaways. There are a number of great books of the market that explain big, Bible truths in colorful, simple ways. The kids will want their parents to read their books. The parents will learn from the simple text, too.

🌀 “Parents Equipped at Church: Classes” 🌀

- One church offered a special class in Sunday School hour on family worship that lasts a couple of weeks.
- Some churches have a “parenting track” during Sunday School that lasts a quarter or a half year.
- A couple churches hold special summer classes that reviewed parents' roles as discipler of their children and gave them ideas of things they could do with their children in the worship services, at home with their children, and other common parenting issues.
- Kids are, of course, constantly growing up. Advice a parent needed with a toddler is very different from the advice they need with a middle schooler. These classes can be a great way of reminding parents of the basics, but also giving them new advice for each new phase their child is in.
- And, even a regular Sunday School class on any Biblical topic can help parents be better equipped to teach their children at home.
- Workshops for parents; Dad's/Mom's breakfasts to encourage one another.
- Don't forget the power of preaching the congregation to encourage one another in deliberate conversation and care for each other. This can be anything from a caring conversation to a full-blown discipling relationship. Members help each other so much just through building each other up. Encourage this as you preach, pastor!

☞ “Parents Equipped at Church: Members’ Meetings” ☞

- Discuss in members’ meetings what parents can do at home or in the worship services with their children. Review a resource or a book for families/children each meeting. If desired, you can even have a copy on hand to give away or to have available in the church library or bookstall.

☞ “Parents Equipped at Church: Membership Classes” ☞

- Since it is the part of most church covenants that parents are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and many also include that church members are to help each other in doing this, membership classes are a great time to address this.
- Because you may have family-integrated families join your church, membership classes are also a great time to bring up the children’s ministry philosophy and how we are to encourage one another. Make sure to underscore this includes not presenting your view of children’s ministry (or of homeschooling, which also often is the case with these families) as the only way that Christians should raise their children. Better these potential members decide to go somewhere else before they join, if they cannot agree with this approach.
- Membership classes are also where most pastors make sure to bring up the elders’/ church’s position of baptism of children for parents to understand and consent to.

☞ “Mission Settings: Equipping New Believing Parents and Children” ☞

- First converts, rarely both husband and wife. It can be very tricky to disciple kids with just one spouse on board.
- One pastor wrote a practical catechism for adults to use with questions and answers tailored to culture and their needs. This worked to catechize adults and kids at same time.
- In countries with persecution, need to teach to kids on persecution and what happens if parents are arrested. Prepare for the culture they will be in.
- Parenting: gather all the believers in the city together to talk about this.
- The older the kids/parents the more baggage there is to unpack. Easier with 2nd generation who are parenting from belief, instead of converted.



chapter 40

Coffee Shop Pep Talks



I asked the pastors if they could go back and have a coffee pep talk with themselves right before they assumed their position as pastor, what would they tell themselves about children's ministry.

Here's their answers:

☞ “Providing Leadership to Children’s Ministry” ☞

- “Don’t let children’s ministry run as a separate entity. Keep it under the elders’ teaching vision and care for whole congregation.”
- “Own the importance of children’s ministry.”
- “Do not over delegate leadership just to do more. Do less and keep overseeing it. Grow more slowly.”
- “Just do this” is not enough. Model and entrust is what we all must do.”
- “Don’t be so slow to see the need and importance of children’s ministry.”
- “Top-down approval of children’s ministry decisions is not to be underestimated.”
- “Know that children’s ministry is one of the areas ripe for division. You might not feel like you want to spend much time on it, but need to for the sake for the whole ministry. Do it quickly!”
- “I knew children’s ministry shouldn’t be an afterthought, but not until I got started did I realize what a big deal it is. Plan ahead.”
- “Keep to your goals (volunteer limits, view on baptisms, etc.) even with pressures coming in from other things or people. They need you to lead them.”

☞ “Healthy Church Matters” ☞

- “Church planting not using a healthy church model is so hard. Don’t do it!”
- “Having a shared vision of leadership/church with among the elders makes such a difference. Especially watch out for the members attracted to the family-integrated approach. They think only they should disciple their children and can often be quick to tell others that’s the only right way to raise kids It is a privilege to disciple other people’s kids. It is a joint responsibility of our covenant.”
- “Church covenant and membership and plurality of elders make it easier to make leadership decisions for children’s ministry and for the church.”
- “When you bring on newer elders, see that they really understand what it means to hold to the teaching on baptism/conversion or whatever is new. They might not get it as much as you think and under pressure this creates bad conversations and disunity.”

☞ “Teaching Children’s Ministry” ☞

- “Start teaching on deacons asap. Deacons will help keep your church from burning out. But make sure to have limits even on deacons serving so they are well-fed and have times to rest. Three-year terms are good.”
- “Churches of mainly new Christians will especially need regular teaching that they are their children’s primary spiritual caregivers, that it might not be easy, but don’t give up.”
- “Primacy of God’s Word to help you stay the course.”
- “Teach from the church covenant the mutual responsibility for the spiritual care of the kids.”
- “Clearly, regularly teach that children’s ministry serves the preaching of the Word; not replacing parents, but freeing them up to be equipped which grows their ability to teach their kids.”
- “Encourage parents! Family is huge part of the Christian life and how to train kids. Teach them how to evangelize, disciple, etc. their kids and how to help them do that.”

☪ “Leading Children’s Ministry Leaders” ☪

- “Meet with Children’s Ministry Administrator more frequently and try to train her more as well as press in on how tired she really is.”
- “Wish had had given more direction earlier on to volunteers who wanted to know how to help.”
- Church Plants: “Have people who know what to do and share vision in place from the beginning. Even for the first Sunday.”
- “Get the right children’s ministry in team in place from before the beginning! Share the load; plan to replace and rotate leaders off so that they don’t burn out.”

☪ “Spending Time with Kids, Parents, and Teachers” ☪

- “Would have been more present with the kids and to encourage leaders.”
- “Once a semester, have the pastor teach kids in Sunday School, himself, to connect with them; direct exposure to kids helps.”
- “Would have been well-served to connect more with parents and the kids.”
- “Wish I would have loved the kids more.”

☪ “Youth Ministry” ☪

- “Youth ministry is a very big deal. And changing the ideal away from entertainment excitement to the attractiveness of the gospel was unheard of. The old members had no category for a church this size without a youth pastor. They couldn’t imagine. A specialty pastor is a must in their culture.”
- “I would have come with more compassion to be a parent of teenager—so hard! Would have been much less judgmental for going to a different church because of a better youth group.”
- Ministry may come in unusual ways: youth ministry for teenage girls who join in the women’s Bible study for all the women and learn and love it.
- Youth group come when youth grow up in the church. It may take years before you have a youth group. But if families stay, it will eventually happen. Youth groups can be wonderful places for your teens to maybe find Christian friends, but more likely, have leaders who are godly men and women living out their lives and be available to get to know. These leaders can be instrumental in providing additional wisdom to what their parents give, and sometimes are more easily taken on board, simply because it wasn’t the parents who said it.

☞ “Creating a New Vision” ☞

- “The old structures and vision needed to die, but it was so hard. Don’t give in or give up. Just keep teaching and keep changing slowly but surely and gently.”
- “I started out with affirmations and denials of what we believe: we are not going to do this or that. Would have been better to give them a positive vision.”
- “Keep the worship gathering primary. Bring kids up in the gathering; train kids in children’s ministry for the gathering. Help parents be equipped in the gathering; help parents be equipped to take the “gathering” home to be able to use what they’ve learned with their children.”
- “Children’s ministry should supplement not substitute for parents. Choose programs that support parents and children with classes that prepare for families to gather together at church and grow together at home. Try to enrich and enhance, not distract or detract from the gathering at church and the gathering at home.”

☞ “Creating a New Structure” ☞

- “Strive to get ahead of the children’s ministry curve. Plan ahead. Kids do nothing but grow up! Think about what they will need next. Look at any “clumps” of kids you have. Realize that clump will shift upward each year. On top of that, you will very likely have growth from new families.”
- “Create a simple but easily expandable model to be able to cater to visitors, since that’s the bread and butter of a church plant.”
- “Try to build a children’s ministry program that is: Pleasant, predictable and a place to meet people. Do what you can to make serving in children’s ministry a joy for your volunteers to serve: good curriculum, predictable, regular schedules, supplies in place, all help. Encourage volunteers about the opportunity to not just share the gospel with the children and support parents, but to get to better know each other by serving together.”
- “Don’t change too much until you have the right team to do it.”
- “Beg, borrow and steal ideas from others. There’s a lot of good stuff you don’t have to create yourself. Only need to shape.”
- “Church Planters in Borrowed/Rented Facilities: Be prepared for how hard it is to have children’s ministry without walls and without storage space. It feels very nomadic and it takes a lot more work to set up. Getting volunteers who will help with set up and take down each week helps teachers a lot. Try to think as simply as possible.”

“Spreading the Vision”

- “Send your leaders to a conferences, such as Children Desiring God (Truth 78) or the CHBC Children’s Ministry Workshop.”
- “Be committed to teaching in right doctrine until church wants to move. Bring whole church along with you.”
- “Senior pastors, when taking on new staff: train them carefully, especially in baptism position.”
- “New elders: train them carefully and make sure they are in agreement on baptism position.”
- Think discipleship: training parents and children, etc, not just structural change.
- “Spend time with parents.”
- “Change can come more easily when membership and church covenant and constitution in place.”
- “Preach on the church covenant to help show members how they can care for one another even raising kids. Use serving in children’s ministry as well as deliberate encouragement of each other in conversation as helping fulfill the covenant.”
- “Children’s ministry usually is explosive because people care so much. Try to understand what they care and preach/teach to that first.”
- “There were so many battles at my church from the beginning. I wish I would have focused on training the leader of Children’s Ministry and Youth ministry and bringing them into the new vision.”

“Child Protection Policy”

- “Don’t do anything with kids if you do not have adequate safety measures in place for the children under your care. Church Planters: if you have time to only do one thing for children’s ministry before you start, make sure that one thing is a CPP:”
- “Changing to a CPP: tell them that it’s good for visitors; make it a service-oriented thing, not a “we don’t trust you anymore thing.” It may seem awkward at first, but you will soon be grateful.”
- “Adopt a CPP as soon as possible to lessen the amount of retro fitting of more rigorous policies on old members who may feel like the new changes are a personal affront.”

☪ “What to Do First” ☪

- “Ask yourself: “What is the goal? Who needs to be served?”
- “Look for safe first. Safe can’t wait. “
- “As hard as it is, you have to have a children’s ministry ”thing” of some kind for families to come and stay. Try to make that thing fit what you have the best you can.”
- “Look into the teaching: is it sound, heretical or moralistic? What is the approach to the gospel and conversion of children? What can you start to change through preaching? What absolutely needs to be changed now? What is the climate for change? If hostile, go more slowly and preach your changes first.”

☪ “Changing Teachers and Teaching Gently” ☪

- “Adding limits to volunteering helped a lot in removing teachers that needed changing, especially those who were territorial/would not attend service.”
- “In re-vitalizing a church there are often sentimentality that needs to be gently dealt with, especially if doing away with old stuff or programs. Try to value these people and find ways forward for them to help. Help them catch the vision through prayer and through conversation, the greater helping the lesser not hurt so much.”
- “Train more on the basics of how to teach kids.”
- “Have lots of patience with those who don’t get how to lead kids’ ministry in a more biblical way. Patience, grace, gentle, God-like love for the people as you change.”
- “If you have a transient congregation, you need to re-train every year.”
- “You need to re-train as the culture, the parents, the church changes.”
- “Children’s Ministry Administrator: Find someone to do your job long before you plan to go and train them. “

☪ “Unbeatable Help” ☪

- “One overseas church plant: A volunteer coming from States to take it on and strongly encouraging us elders to do something. She educated us and equipped us under our leadership.”
- “Deacons/deaconesses are key to making children’s ministry happen, especially with no one on staff.”
- “Want to teach adults? Start with the kids. Great place for future pastors/elders to start. And these leaders can provide gifted teaching to the children. Win and win.”

☪ “Helping Members Upset with Changes” ☪

- “Slow, sustainable change, within bandwidth of the church ability to change. Recognize that people who are upset by change are usually motivated by love.”
- “Handle difficulties by talking to people before you teach publicly, bringing them along.”
- “Impute good motives to those who are upset and act badly.”
- “Preach the change and talk to people; assume good motives, even if bad decisions.”
- “Older, long-term teachers are often the ones its harder to convince and change.”

☪ “New Curriculum” ☪

- “Don’t just roll out a new curriculum and think that’s going to fix all your problems. Every curriculum has to be fit to you. And will frequently require re-fitting as you change.”
- “Incorporate catechism into the kids’ program.
- “So much curriculum is screen-based and teachers don’t really have to learn how to teach. Make the switch to actual teaching. It’s so much better. It’s a big switch, but good one.”

☪ “Respect for Scripture” ☪

- “If you teach children Scripture, don’t allow disrespect for it; have classroom discipline.”

☞ “Preparing to Gather Together in the Worship Service” ☞

- “Teach songs in class they will be singing in the service.”
- “Sunday is way better proactive. Help the kids prepare ahead of time by reading the sermon passage etc. during the week ahead.”
- “Make sermon cards available so families can know what is coming and can prepare.”

☞ “Children and the Aroma of the Gospel” ☞

- “Remember that your children apart from Christ are at enmity with God. Teach, pray and be faithful by God’s grace.”
- “Members can have a huge impact to the children in the church by their service.”
- “Hard to be pastor’s kids who are oldest and have no youth group etc. Find another church where they can take part. It’s not a crime.”

☞ “In Missions Settings” ☞

- “Whatever your family does, disciple well, incorporate the regulative principle into your worship service; add applications for kids and make it simple enough that adults could take and teach their kids, too.”
- “Teaching truths at kids’ level to new believers/cultures is great for them and great for them teaching their kids.”
- “Catechism is key, even if you are writing your own. Don’t forget to add in practical applications of the gospel to your particular culture. Catechisms are in public domain. Pirate, re-word, re-shape.”
- “Go slow to go fast. Sometimes this means waiting to do a lot more with the 2nd generation Christians.”
- “It’s a long, long process to go from new believer in these cultures to pastoring with all the elements, including the parenting involved to be qualified.”
- “Help the missionary kids by sending over young adults who can show them the example of living as godly believers. Just the example alone is so helpful.”
- “Missionary kids deal with so much transiency, sense of loss. Help them and help their parents know how to help them through these hardships.”

“Content with Pace”

- “God’s Word does the work. You are dead. You are insufficient. Keep going. God’s Word is enough.”
- “Avoid the temptation of children’s ministry envy. Look to your needs and your limits and be content.”
- “Be ok with things not being all ok, just don’t be not with them staying that way.”
- “Make the most of what you have.”
- “Do what you can. Expect God to be faithful.

“Sustainable Pace”

- “If you can’t staff it, don’t do it. And by staffing, I mean volunteers, not your actual church staff. I mean member volunteers.”
- “Have healthy, sustainable limits on any service roles. This helps avoid burn-out. And, you are tending the flock you have well.”
- Don’t burn out early your eager volunteers. Look for church to grow. Don’t let it be through children ministry; robust or bust.
- “Do what you can; don’t do more.”
- “A good structure of volunteer scheduling helps burnout; stick to your limits.”

“Slow Pace”

- “Slow down, keep in control; do less.”
- “Wait long and go slowly.”

☪ “Strategic Pace” ☪

- Might not be where you want to be, but do the best you can now. Add as you can, headed towards what you hope to have some day.
- Think a few years down the road.
- “Be strategic. Don’t build it just for “them” to come. and burn out for who you have already.”
- Especially church plants need to build with flexibility since you never know who is going to come each week. Use curriculum that can expand to meet the new need in the moment, until you reach a new stable plateau and add a new class. This can help you keep the pace sustainable for who you have volunteering, but also ready for the extra kids when they come.

☪ “Safe Pace” ☪

- “Don’t feel like a failure if you can “only” provide safe child care and no kids’ classes. You are providing for the parents and that’s a big deal. Don’t burnout your workers.”
- “Safe is a great goal. Don’t look down on safe.”

☪ “Change of Pace” ☪

- “Focus on accessibility of preaching the word to parents and add programs as you can.”
- “Don’t change too much until you have the right team to do it.”
- “Have patience in looking for like-minded partners because if “I don’t do it, it won’t really get done” is no way to lead a children’s ministry. The church must own it.”
- “When you send out a church plant: It’s always so hard to lose so many key volunteers when a church plant goes out. Always have to pull back and reassess. Offer less until more is sustainable. Regular pattern of ebb and flow. The cost of the gospel going out.”
- “Shave off one year at a time when trying to add kids back into the worship gathering (that previously were in a segregated youth or children’s church.)”



chapter 41 Snap Your Fingers



I asked the pastors what they wish they could instantly change in children's ministry at their church right now. Here's their answers:

🌀 "More Stuff" 🌀

- "A church building."
- "More space in the worship hall so all can gather."
- "Africa: More contextual resources, such as songs."
- "Sweden, Russia, Turkey, Spain, Brazil, France: More curriculum in native language."

🌀 "Change in Elders' Mindset" 🌀

- "That the elders wouldn't think of children's ministry as women's stuff, but realize that it's their responsibility and opportunity to teach the gospel and make disciples to their church, entrusted to hands of often many others."

🌀 "Change in Parents' Mindset" 🌀

- "Parents would understand the importance of their children being a part of the worship gathering."
- "Parents would take seriously their job of discipling their children. They would see church as an equipper and support, but not a replacement for their input in their children's life."
- "Cheerful trust on matters of baptism."
- "Deliberate conversations of encouragement and wisdom-seeking."
- "That I could have three hundred dads so in love with Jesus that they talk to their kids about Jesus."
- "More contentedness: Live within limits happily."

☞ “Change in Members’ Mindset” ☞

- “That members would see that children’s ministry IS ministry fertile ground. That it bears great fruit to support parents and leaves a legacy of good rich teaching from the beginning. It is an exciting opportunity for the gospel in our midst every week.”
- “People who shared the idea that it’s a privilege to disciple other people’s kids.”
- “Grace for different school styles.”
- “Grace for different views on family worship and use of children’s ministry programs or not.”
- “Contagious excitement for the opportunities for the gospel that children’s ministry is.”
- “More passion: volunteers who own children’s ministry and understand the huge importance and put energy into teaching well.”

☞ “Change in Members’ Participation” ☞

- “Would see that they are partnering with families as part of the church covenant. Their responsibility and their privilege.”
- “Create a culture that is more thoughtful towards how much moms need a break. That older mothers/people to give break to those younger moms, etc.”
- “More singles serving the parents; not just the parents serving the parents.”
- “More intergenerational responsibility for training up children and teaching parents and taking part in children’s ministry.”
- “More men to take initiative in children’s ministry.”
- “More volunteers to be immediately compliant with the child protection policy.”
- “More mature Christians who could teach.”
- “Never have any more shortages in member volunteer needs.”
- “More deaconesses!”
- “Non-staff person to do schedules, etc so the staff doesn’t have to.”
- “More skilled volunteers/load bearers willing to help pioneer a new program and help train others in it.”