

The
Praise Factory
Pitchbook

(3rd edition)

Constance Dever

Dear Friend,

This booklet is the pitchbook I created to tell pastors and children's ministry leaders about Praise Factory at conferences. Each page represents a poster at our display booth; plus, this 2nd edition adds in new articles and materials that have been created over the past decade.

This book allows you to skip the airfare and crowds, and learn a little about Church-Shaped Children's Ministry and the many, free Praise Factory resources from the comfort of your easy chair. May you find them thought-provoking and helpful.

Visit praisefactory.org to learn more and to download everything!

Constance Dever

in association with

IX 9Marks

THE PRAISE FACTORY



**BUILDING *TOMORROW'S*
HEALTHY CHURCHES
TODAY!**

RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

CURRICULUM FOR KIDS

HARD COPIES

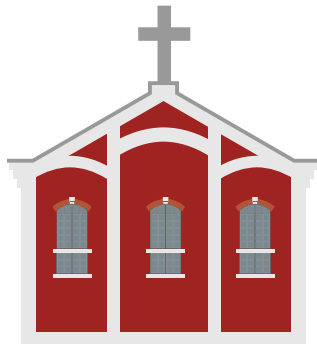
FREE DOWNLOADS

Available at
amazon

THE PRAISE FACTORY
www.praisefactory.org

A LABOR OF LOVE

from



CAPITOL HILL BAPTIST CHURCH

The Praise Factory curriculum has been being created for and used with the children of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, in Washington, DC, over the past 20+ years.

Others became interested in the curriculum; and so, praisefactory.org was born.

The curriculum and the website are a labor of love of Constance Dever, wife of senior pastor, Mark Dever.

She creates it for CHBC, but humbly offers it to you.... and that's why it's free.

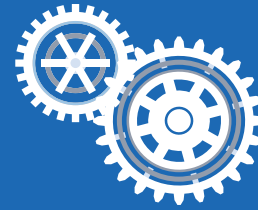
Think children's ministry seems unimportant? Think again!
Its impact upon the church...upon YOUR church... is profound.

5

REASONS WHY
YOUR MINISTRY



IS



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

1

THE HARVEST-RICH, 4-14 WINDOW

The 4-14 window is the most common age range of conversion... and false conversion.

- How will you bring the gospel to these children?
- How will you look for true conversion BEFORE you baptize, for the sake of the children and the purity of the church?

2

EVERYONE IS A CHILD

Everyone who attends your church is, or once was, a child.

- How can you fortify these future members and leaders today, preparing them to be a stronger part, Lord willing, of the church of tomorrow?

3

MOST WILL BE PARENTS

Most people who attend your church are, or will be, parents, the primary spiritual caregivers of their kids. This will be one of life's most important, time-consuming, and challenging callings.

- How can you equip your membership for their leading role in spiritually nurturing their children?

4

MANY MEMBERS ARE INVOLVED

Children's ministry frequently enlists more volunteers, teaching and caring for more souls, than any church ministry other than preaching from the pulpit.

- How do you balance nurturing your volunteers' own spiritual needs with their service to your church's families?

5

PASTORS ARE RESPONSIBLE

Pastors are responsible before God for the soundness of all teaching that takes place in their local church. This includes the teaching in the kids' classes.

- How can you oversee curriculum choices and volunteer teachers, ensuring that the teaching is sound?

The Praise Factory
provide churches with
2 kinds of resources
focused on
supporting parents
and teaching children...

learn more at
praisefactory.org

THE PRAISE FACTORY

...while caring for volunteers,
and keeping
the worship gathering
“the main thing” for
ALL of the church.



The two kinds of Praise Factory resources

1

CHURCH-SHAPED CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

ideas to help churches
of all sizes,
create a church-shaped
children's ministry

2

CHURCH-SHAPED CURRICULUM FOR KIDS

curriculum that
prepares children
to gather meaningfully
with the church

Ideas to help churches of all sizes,
create a church-shaped children's ministry in their setting.

BUILDING *Tomorrow's* HEALTHY CHURCHES *Today!*

in association with
IX 9Marks

CHURCH-SHAPED CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

learn more at
praisefactory.org

THE PRAISE FACTORY

IT STARTS with YOU,
the **PASTOR!**



SERVE WHO YOU HAVE...



with WHAT YOU HAVE...



...that ALL MIGHT WORSHIP,
for the **GOOD** of ALL,
to the **GLORY** of GOD!

1

Children's Ministry that **THRIVES**
under the leadership
of the pastors...

2

...within the
healthy, sustainable limits
of your church's resources.

3

And, that supports parents
as they fulfill their calling to
spiritually nurture their children...

4

...and leads the children
on the path to gathering together
meaningfully with the church.

CHURCH-SHAPED MEANS:

Mindful of the Gathering



...that ALL MIGHT WORSHIP!

POINTS TO the Gathering

HOW?

- Church-shaped Children's Ministry points to the final, Great Gathering of all God's people with God at the end of time. It desires for all children to hear and receive the gospel with repentance and faith, that they might become God's people and be a part of that gathering (Revelation 19:6-9).
- It points to the earthly gatherings of God's people in local churches, the weekly "dress rehearsal" for the Great Gathering to come. Hebrews 10:25 urges us to regularly be a part of these gatherings.
- It even points to the daily, family gatherings of godly parents with their children at home, where parents continue training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4)

WHY?

These biblical gatherings are God's good plan for His people to come to faith and grow to maturity.

PROVIDES THROUGH the Gathering

HOW?

- Families are equipped through the preaching of God's Word and are strengthened through the worship of God, as they gather together with the local church (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- They are encouraged by fellow members as they share, pray, and work to present each other mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28). They spur one another on toward love and good works (Hebrews 10:25), including helping each other to raise the children under their care (Titus 2:1-8).
- Children hear God's Word and see the church body living for God and loving one another.
- Parents are equipped at church to train their children at home (2 Timothy 14-17).
- There are simple things pastors can do to enhance the gathering times for children, such as preaching from an outline that children can follow, being mindful of children in applications and illustrations, or giving children a related question to ask their parents when they get home.

WHY?

- This is the core of biblical children's ministry. If you are faithful in this basic, biblical model, in a real sense, you are being faithful to equip parents and train children. As you add more to this core, make sure it supports the worship gathering. Keep the main thing, the main thing.

PROVIDES FOR the Gathering

HOW?

- When thinking about going beyond the basic model, start by looking for who would especially benefit from extra help, so they can be better fed through the worship service.
- Providing safe childcare for parents with small children is an invaluable service that supports the preaching of the Word. It gives these parents a chance to learn and grow, instead of being distracted. And that in turn, helps parents to better disciple their children. Be sure to have a child protection policy in place before you offer any childcare.
- By providing a simple worship bulletin for the service for children to write down the outline or draw a picture related to something in the service or sermon can be very helpful.

WHY?

- To enhance the equipping of God's people and the children under their care through what the church is doing already in the worship gathering.

PREPARES FOR the Gathering

HOW?

- By providing the next week's sermon Bible passage for families to read and discuss ahead of time.
- By offering classes for adults or children, other than during the worship service time. Children's classes can even include elements such as prayers, hymn singing, Bible verse study, or catechism work that prepare them for what they will hear in the worship service.
- By even offering classes during all/part of the worship service for younger children with short attention spans, but **WHICH PHASE OUT** as the children get older.
- Pastors need to be involved in setting the teaching vision for classes. They also need to be, on some level, involved in choosing teachers and curriculum, so that doctrine taught in the classes is in keeping with the preaching, and with the church covenant. Overseeing all the teaching in their local church is their God-given responsibility (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

WHY?

- To provide children with a ramp up into the Sunday gatherings. Thinking about the Bible passage ahead of time as a family, gives parents a chance to help their children better understand the preaching in the worship service. (Some parents even help their kids choose words from the passage to listen for during the worship service/sermon. Great idea!)
- Classes offered during all or part of the worship service are always temporary. They are never to provide a permanent substitute. They phase out by age limit, as older children are able to take part meaningfully in the service. Teachers and parents can be encouraged to look for signs of a child's readiness for more extended time in the worship service and increasingly include them in it.

PROTECTS VOLUNTEERS FOR the Gathering

HOW?

- By setting healthy limits on how frequently someone volunteers in children's ministry programs.
- By making sure the number of programs you provide meets the sustainable number of volunteers you have, so that no one is being asked to serve too frequently for their own spiritual good.
- By setting up teaching priorities for children's ministry programs, so if there becomes a regular pattern of insufficient volunteers, pastors know to limit or even cut out a program of a lower teaching priority. This helps the church continue to sustain programs of higher teaching priority.

WHY?

- Children's ministry is notorious for either being a hiding place for those who don't want to go to the church service; or, as a burn-out place for those who feel responsible for making sure there are always enough volunteers to staff every program. These are both, in practice, forms of neglecting to meet together that the church is to avoid (Hebrews 10:25). Protect both of these kinds of people for their own, spiritual good.

PATIENTLY WAITS TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN the Gathering

HOW?

- Children are not just small adults. They go through developmental phases that gradually give them the same decision-making skills as an adult. These phases need to be kept in mind as we talk to children about God, share the gospel with them, and encourage them in discipleship.
- Young children memorize better than they can understand. We can fill their minds with truths that they can increasingly interact with and choose to live by as they grow up. Such a legacy of truth is a great gift. It is one that continues to be unwrapped over years, even decades, as a child matures into adulthood.
- Young children can be sincerely converted, but are better served by being asked to patiently wait to be baptized, take the Lord's Supper, and become a church member. This act of waiting can be a converted child's first step in trusting the pastors' wisdom, even at a time when they don't fully understand the reasoning, and they would rather not wait. For children who are NOT truly converted, this waiting time allows for their hearts to be revealed, and keeps the needed decision before them.
- Waiting for a child to become commonly known by other church members (not just parents) as a disciple in their own right, is the same mark of conversion looked for in every other person received into membership by the congregation. It is right and good to give these converted children of the congregation time to be seen as members in their own right.
- Parents should be made aware of the patient-waiting approach to baptism before they become members, in case they cannot assent to this position. This can save much difficulty, and even disunity, within the church.

WHY?

- Willingness to wait patiently and persevere in growing is a great indication of conversion.
- This is extremely important for giving a child true assurance of faith, as well as protecting the pure witness of the church.

CHURCH-SHAPED MEANS: *Encouraging One Another*



...that ALL MIGHT WORSHIP!



PASTORS

WHAT?

Pastors love, lead, limit; preach, pray, protect; equip and encourage the congregation as they work together to raise the children in their care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

HOW?

- Pastors provide pastoral oversight of families, programs and children's ministry volunteers.
- They love the flock under their care, from youngest to oldest.
- They are known as the church's leaders over children's ministry, and take responsibility for it.
- They lead by providing teaching priorities; approving program and curriculum choices; and, by setting healthy limits on volunteering.
- They encourage, advise, and support parents, teachers, and the children's ministry team.
- They hold regular meetings with children's ministry leaders to best care for all involved.
- They protect children and volunteers through a child protection policy.
- They pray for their congregation and equip them through the preaching of God's Word.



PARENTS

WHAT?

Parents are equipped to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

HOW?

- Parents provide the primary, spiritual care (discipling) for their children, training them at church and at home.
- God equips parents through His Word, preached at church and studied at home.
- They parent by the power of the Holy Spirit, and with the help, prayers, wisdom, and encouragement of the pastors and fellow members of their local church.



CHILDREN

WHAT?

Children are equipped for life, godliness and gathering with God's people.

HOW?

- Children usually join in the church's worship services with their parents or other who bring them.
- They hear the gospel and learn about God from the preaching of God's Word in the worship services, in Bible classes, and through the fellowship of members caring for one another.
- They watch God's people worship God and love one another. The church provides children with a living testimony of God's transforming work in His people, through His Word, and by the power of His Holy Spirit.
- If their parents are believers, children also have the honor of learning more of the gospel and seeing it lived out at home.
- Children are a developmental work in progress. The church knows this and cares for them with patience, love, perseverance, and prayer. The Lord may use what the children learn and watch while they are still young, but sometimes not for many years to come.
- Pastors encourage young children who profess Christ to patiently wait for their faith to bear mature fruit before being baptized into church membership and taking the Lord's Supper. The process often takes years. This is done out of care for the child, so as not to confuse childish eagerness with true conversion. And for the church, to keep its witness pure.



WHAT?

The basic, biblical model for equipping parents to train their children is through the church's corporate worship. Here, God's people are strengthened through worship, prayers, and the preaching of God's Word. These gatherings are where children come to watch, listen, learn, and hopefully worship, too. Everything else churches do to equip parents and teach children should flow to and from this gathering, not serve as its replacement.

HOW?

- The church worship services provide a glimpse of the Great Gathering of all God's people with God at the end of time. It can be a beautiful witness to the children, too.
- God chooses to use the preaching of His Word not only to equip and teach parents, but children, too. He uses His people's worship of Him to make Himself known even to children.
- Churches can help parents train up their children in the corporate worship services. They can suggest or provide resources, such as special, worship bulletins. They can give out the sermon Bible passage in advance, so families can read, discuss, and begin to understand it ahead of time.
- Pastors preach using a simple sermon outline, kid-friendly applications and illustrations when able.

WHAT?

Programs partner with the preaching, so that all members might be better equipped and children might be better trained up for life, godliness, and gathering with God's people.

HOW?

- Programs support, not replace, the parents' own spiritual training of their children.
- Pastors choose programs as part of the teaching of God's Word in the church under their care.
- Programs are carefully scheduled so as to not interfere with the worship services, unless they provide support for the worship service (such as childcare for infants and toddlers; or classes for younger children with limited attention span). Programs like these are phased out as children grow older, so that eventually, all the children are in the worship service. The gathering is always the goal.
- Pastors not only choose the programs, but prioritize them in order of highest importance for the edification of all. Usually, the children least able to understand the worship service (infants and toddlers), but who also have the greatest capacity of distracting their parents or the congregation in the worship service, take top priority.
- Changing families' needs, fluctuations in volunteers availability, and other constraints (such as budget and classroom space) cause the pastors to be continually reassessing what the church needs and can sustainably offer. Sometimes there is growth, and new needs can be met. Sometimes there are decreases, and cutbacks are needed. The priorities the pastors set on programs help them discern what to add when they can, or where to make cuts that protect those needing the most help.
- Care for the WHOLE church--families and volunteers-- is of prime concern to the pastors, and directly affects what programs are offered when.



WHAT?

Members are equipped to encourage and support parents and children.

HOW?

- Members support and encourage parents by mentoring each other; and, by helping to care, teach and mentor their children through the local church.
- They provide the children with a testimony of God's grace at work in their lives.
- They serve in children's classes within healthy limits set by elders, to meet the needs of children's ministry, but not at the expense of their own spiritual nurturing.
- They are carefully screened and trained for serving with the children. They comply with the church's child protection policy for their own good, the good of the children, and the good of the church.
- They may serve in "over-sized" teaching teams that don't require every teacher to teach every session. This spreads out the teaching load, helps avoid burn-out, and provides built-in, substitute teachers for classes. This is also a great way to train less-inexperienced teachers, by pairing them with more experienced, lead teachers.

WHAT?

Children's ministry leaders are equipped to carry out the pastors' vision for children's ministry.

HOW?

- Children's ministry leaders work under the leadership of the pastors.
- They bring the pastoral vision to life through the curriculum they implement; the volunteers they enlist and help train; by keeping pastors informed; and, by generally encouraging families.
- They regularly keep the pastors informed, so they can care well for families and volunteers.
- Pastors care for them by even setting limits on how much they miss services. And, by providing deacons and other helpers to serve alongside them.



BIBLE TRUTHS FOR KIDS
AGES 2-11

CHURCH-SHAPED CURRICULUM FOR KIDS

UNDERSTANDABLE
ENJOYABLE
MEMORABLE
... FREE!

Family of 3 Curriculums

16 Units in Each Curriculum

1



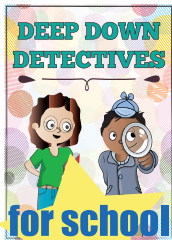
for your youngest children

Hide 'n' Seek Kids
designed for ages 2-3,
often used with ages 2-5



Provides 16, five-lesson Bible Truths, 80 sessions in all

2



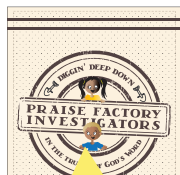
for school starters

Deep Down Detectives
designed for ages 4-6,
often used with ages 3-7... and even adults!



provides 70, three-lesson Bible Truths
210 sessions in all

3



for primary school kids

Praise Factory Investigators
designed for ages K5-11 year olds
often used with ages pre K5-12 year olds...
and even adults!



provides 104, three-lesson Bible Truths, 312 sessions in all*

*1 Old Testament, 1 New Testament, 1 Church History/Missions each



EACH THEME IS INTRODUCED BY A BIG QUESTION AND ANSWER



Preparing kids to gather meaningfully with the church

1

Bible Truths set in redemptive history, on a framework of theology.

3

Colorful, musical, activity-packed made to be customized for your needs ... and it's all free.

2

Children learn more deeply with each curriculum.

4

Each lesson includes elements that prepare children to gather meaningfully with the church.

*Hide and Seek Kids and Deep Down Detectives are completely available now. However, due to the after-effects of cancer, only 52, three-lesson Bible Truths (156 sessions) of Praise Factory Investigators (PFI) are available at this point. As God enables, I would love to write more. But the great thing about this curriculum is that all of redemptive history, all 16 theological themes, are woven into what is available in PFI already. (Units 1,4,5,6,7,8,10,11, and 12.) Please pray for Units 2,3,9,13-16!

PRODUCTION LINE

some Praise Factory distinctives

Understandable.



Simple enough for kids to grasp.
Deep enough that even adults learn.

Teachable.



Scripted lesson plans and stories help
even inexperienced teachers.

Memorable.



Truths are learned, not just introduced.
Multiple lessons are provided for each Bible
Truth. (Use as few or as many as you want.)

Enjoyable.



Choose from 5+ activities each session that
reinforce truths in fun, but meaty ways.
Music, games, art and more. They are all here.

Flexible.



Each theme is a unit of material.
They can be used in any order.
Use one or use all. Mix and match.

**Available
to Parents.**



Easy access to take home sheets, stories,
and music in Parents' Resources sections
at praisefactory.org.

**Easily
Customizable.**



Two ways to download curriculum:
whole units, or to go "Bits and Pieces"
and simply download what you want.

**Affordable...
Actually, Free!**



Free downloads of everything
at praisefactory.org.

Affordable hard copies through
Amazon.

Bible Truths Set in Redemptive History on a Framework of Theology

Deep Down Detectives Unit 15, Bible Truth 6: The Case of the Remembered Rescue Exodus 12; Luke 22; Isaiah 25:6-9



1



2

Unit 15.6 Bible Truth: The Lord's Supper: God's People Remember that Jesus Died to Save Them
Set In Redemptive History: Passover to Lord's Supper to Wedding Feast of the Lamb
On a Framework of Theology: The Church; Covenant; Substitutionary Atonement; Justification; Resurrection; Echatology

The Story Line

1

The people of Israel celebrated the Passover each year to remember how the LORD rescued them from slavery in Egypt.

2

But there are far greater enemies that we ALL need rescuing from: sin and death! We all deserve God's punishment for disobeying Him. And no blood from a lamb will cause God to pass over our sins and rescue us from death... EXCEPT for the blood of the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus.

3

Jesus took the Passover feast and used it to tell His disciples that His body and blood would rescue God's people from sin and death, once and for all.

4

And that's just what Jesus did, when He died on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day. He beat sin and death!

5

God's people are those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. They gather together as the church to worship God and to love one another. They remember what Jesus did for them as they take the Lord's Supper.

6

And they will keep on doing this until at last, all of God's people will be gathered together with Jesus, their Savior and King at the end of time. Then, the Lord's Supper will be fulfilled in the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. God's people will live and rejoice in Him forever.

3

We can become God's people, too, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Ask God to help you! He loves to answer this prayer!



This is an example of the storyboard pictures included with each Hide 'n' Seek Kids and Deep Down Detectives Bible Truth story. You can put up the pictures separately, in clumps, or even as one, big scene. Free downloads: praisefactory.org; hard copies: amazon.com

THE PRAISE FACTORY



Curriculum Mindful of the Regulative Principle

WHAT and WHY?

- Praise Factory curriculum seeks to help children to love God, to live for Him, and to worship Him with God's people.
- The regulative principle is a biblical summary of how God wants to be worshipped.
- Praise Factory incorporates the five elements of this principle into each lesson.
- This is to aid the worship of God during class time; and, to prepare the children to take part meaningfully in their church's worship services, where this principle is fully in use.

READ the BIBLE



PRAISE FACTORY RESOURCES

- Every Praise Factory Bible Truth is taken back to its biblical roots with a Bible passage.
- A kid-friendly explanation of the passage and any special theological terms is included.
- Every lesson also includes a Bible verse game with review questions as a fun way to encourage memorization, while also providing a simple inductive study of the passage.

PREPARING FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP SERVICE

- Bible reading in church sometimes includes concepts that children don't understand.
- Taking time to learn and explain these Bible passages and concepts in class can help children better engage with the Bible readings and preaching in the worship service.

PREACH the BIBLE



PRAISE FACTORY RESOURCES

- A story sermon presents each Bible Truth in the context of redemptive history.
- Some stories have the short span of only a single Bible story. Others include larger chunks of redemptive history (sometimes even the whole story from start to finish!).
- Each story is introduced with a listening question.
- The gospel is always included.

PREPARING FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP SERVICE

- The preaching of God's Word is central to your church's worship service. It can also be the most difficult part for kids to understand.
- The story sermon format provides a little dress rehearsal for listening to the preaching of God's Word in church.
- The biblical and theological content of the story sermons can prepare children to better understand concepts the pastor uses when preaching.
- The listening question helps children learn to listen with a purpose, just as adults do when God's Word is preached in the worship service.

PRAY the BIBLE



PRAISE FACTORY RESOURCES

- Every Bible Truth is turned into an ACTS prayer (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication).
- This prayer format helps the children see how each Bible Truth points us to: praise God; to confess our sins to Him; to thank Him for what He's done through Jesus; and, to ask Him to do great things in this world and in us, for His glory and for our good.

PREPARING FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP SERVICE

- These prayers familiarize the children with these same ACTS elements of prayer that they will hear in church.
- The practice of looking for ACTS in Scripture deepens children's understanding of God, and hones their ability to glean truth from His Word, themselves.
- Hopefully these prayers will also become the children's own prayers that God uses in their hearts and lives, that they might be His people, the church's next generation of members and leaders.

SING the BIBLE



PRAISE FACTORY RESOURCES

- Praise Factory curriculum is filled with music. Music is one of the most powerful, long-lasting, memory tools God has given us... and it is so enjoyable at the same time!
- Each Praise Factory curriculum has a theme song.
- Every unit has a theological summary song.
- Every Bible passage is set to music.
- Hymns are included with important theological words and concepts explained.
- Even the classroom rules and other regular classroom elements are set to music.

PREPARING FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP SERVICE

- Music is an important element of every worship service, but sometimes the songs we sing in church include words or theological concepts children do not understand.
- Introducing Bible verse songs and hymns, and explaining their meaning in class can help children participate more meaningfully in church when the congregation sings or Scripture is read.

SEE the BIBLE



PRAISE FACTORY RESOURCES

- "Seeing the Bible," in the classic, regulative principle sense, is speaking of the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper--the two "visual aids" Jesus gave the church to remember His work done for them and in them.
- Praise Factory curriculum definitely does NOT include these sacrament as an activity. But, each curriculum DOES include a unit on the church with specific teaching on baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- In addition to this, the curriculum uses very careful language that holds out the gospel and provides a clear picture of how God's people live and worship, but without pressuring a decision or assuming conversion.

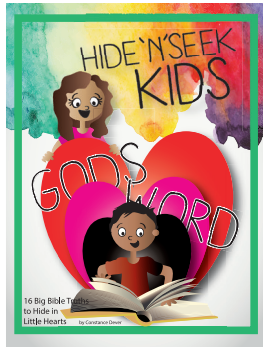
PREPARING FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP SERVICE

- Direct teaching on baptism and the Lord's Supper in class helps children understand these sacraments when they occur in the church services.
- Careful language about conversion and discipleship helps clarify what God requires of any of us before we can be baptized or partake in the Lord's Supper. This is especially important for sake of our children's souls and the purity of the Church. False conversion helps no one, and has harmed many.

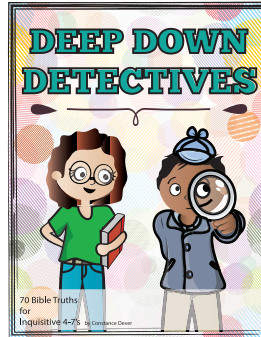
Downloading and Customizing Curriculum: Hide 'n' Seek Kids and Deep Down Detectives

Download Full Curriculum Units

(same as amazon.com hard copies)



Hide 'n' Seek Kids



Deep Down Detectives

OR, Download from "Bits and Pieces" to Create Your Own Custom Curriculum

(materials for each Bible truth laid out ala carte)

Make It Your Own

STEP #1

Pick Your Story



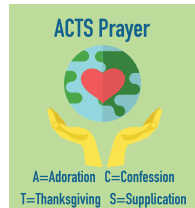
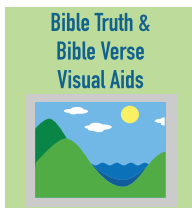
Look at our Lesson Plan

(optional, but helpful)



STEP #2

Bring It to Life! (choose none, any, or all)



STEP #3

Review It!



discussion questions...

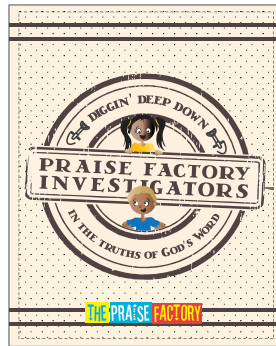
...used with any of these activities:



Downloading and Customizing Curriculum: Praise Factory Investigators

Download Full Curriculum Units

(same as amazon.com hard copies)



Praise Factory Investigators

OR, Download from "Bits and Pieces" to Create Your Own Custom Curriculum

(materials for each Bible truth laid out ala carte)

Make It Your Own

STEP #1

Pick Your Story



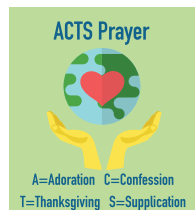
Look at our Lesson Plan

(optional, but helpful)



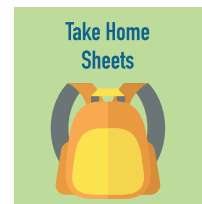
STEP #2

Bring It to Life! (choose none, any, or all)



STEP #3

Review It! choose from these activities (with discussion questions):



plus, a take home sheet

Review
inspired by
Fun

THE PRAISE FACTORY Conduits of Truth

Truth
reinforced by
Action

Drama
Activities



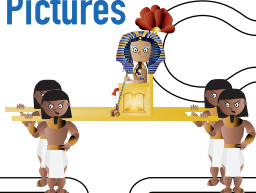
Story-related Snacks



Crafts and
Coloring Sheets



Storyboard
Pictures



Choose What
to Use
The Choice Is
Up to You

every activity is available
in every lesson;
piece together activities that
best fit your needs

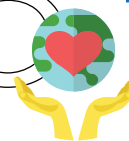
Music &
Sign Language



ACTS Prayer



VIPP Prayer



Story Review
Games



Music, Movement
& Memory Games



Bible Verse
Games



Discussion Questions
(and Answers) to make every activity
as truth-rich as it is fun

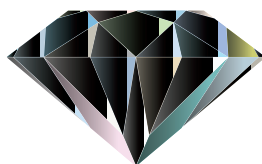


**Take Home Sheets &
Complete Resources Online**
to keep learning more at home

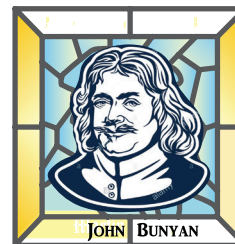


"theology is not just
dry, heady stuff,
but how you live and die"

2 Dead Man and a Diamond



"look at truth from many angles" -- the Puritans



"use the body
as gates
to the heart"

More about Music



Each of the 16 Themes & all of the Bible verses are set to music.



Song games are included that can enhance learning even further.



Praise Factory Investigators also includes sign language and hymns for each Bible Truth.

More about Prayer Time



The ACTS prayer not only includes the children's personal prayer requests, but also springboards off of each Bible Truth.



It broadens their understand of:

A: Who God is (**Adoration**);

C: How we have sinned against Him (**Confession**);



T: What He has done for us through Jesus (**Thanksgiving**); and,



S: How we need God's help to live (**Supplication**).



VIPP

VIPP stands for "Very Important Prayer Person". The children take time to learn and pray for others in their church or overseas. Coloring sheets and games are used to introduced the VIPP before praying for them.

More about Games



Each curriculum comes with three sets of simple games that help children review the Bible Truth, the Bible Verse or the Bible Story.



Assemble each set of games and store them. Use them over and over throughout the curriculum.

Discussion questions (with answers) from the curriculum are used with each game.

The fun of the games makes review of important Bible truths enjoyable and memorable.



More about Crafts and Coloring Sheets



Every session offers AT LEAST one craft/coloring sheet.

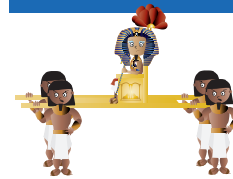


All crafts include meaningful truth.



Use the provided discussion questions to add even more learning depth to craft time.

More about Storyboard Pictures



Available for all Hide' 'n' Seek Kids & Deep Down Detectives Bible stories.

Used to tell story and in playing Bible Story Games.



Cut out, laminate and go! Ready to re-use as you repeat the curriculum.

Available in **2 SIZES** for smaller or larger storyboards.

More about Drama Activities



Every session of Praise Factory Investigators includes **TWO** drama activities--one for younger children, one for older children. There is a simple script for the teacher to read as the children act out the main elements of the story.

This activity is particularly good for sharing with parents or other classes of children at the end of your session.

More about Story-related Snacks



Every session of Praise Factory Investigators includes a story-related snack that is a great discussion starter after story time.

New!

Detective Dan ages 2-7

86 short, interactive
Bible truths & stories
with an extra detective flair



HARD COPIES

Available at
amazon



learn more about
Detective Dan's
Big Question Box

FREE DOWNLOADS

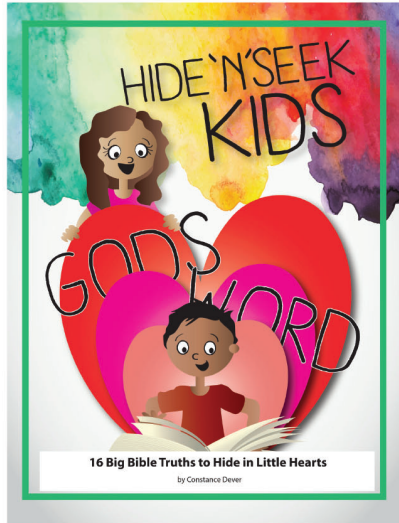
THE PRAISE FACTORY

www.praisefactory.org

A Lot More for all ages 2-7

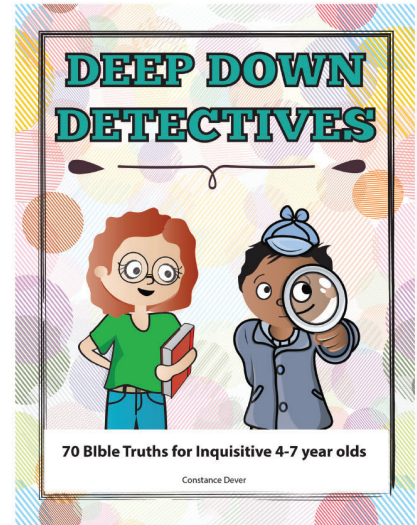
a new, simplified version that makes more Bible truths & stories accessible to more kids

Hide 'n' Seek Kids



★ 16 Bible Truths & Stories for 2-5's

Deep Down Detectives

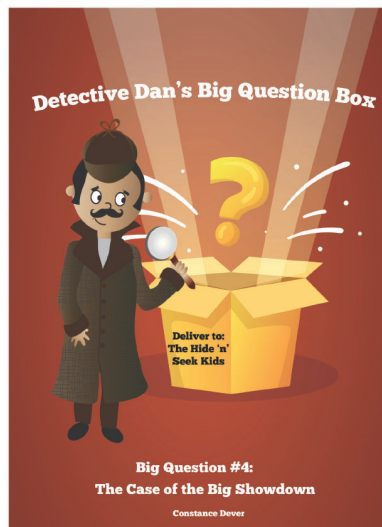


★ 70 Bible Truths & Stories for 3-7's

Curriculum Structure

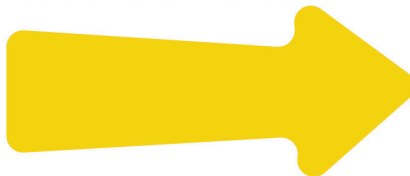
+

Detective Dan's Big Question Box



★ all 86 Bible Truths & Stories for 2-7's ★

same Bible truths, same Bible stories



different approach, shorter length

Interactive Storybook Structure

Detective Dan Overview

the 3 sections of each Detective Dan story use one, use all, depending on age, attention span, and time*

*At CHBC, in our single age classes, we use only Part #3 with our 2's,
Parts #2 and #3 with our 3's,
and all three parts with the older kids.

PART #1

Detective Dan sends the kids a Big Question to answer with help of a Bible verse clue.

PART #2

After finding the answer, Detective Dan tells them a related Bible story.

PART #3

The session ends with a prayer and Wiggle and Worship Time, a chance to reinforce the key truths in song and movement.



Detective Dan Distinctives

EASY PREP

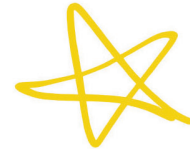
pick-up-and-go interactive format
with almost no prep time

simple for less experienced teachers to use

can teach from print or view on a screen



ADDED ACTIVITIES



can spice up the teaching time by using a physical
Big Question Box and the provided paper props

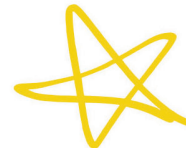
easy access to the songs
through QR codes on story pages



can be used with the games, crafts, and take home
sheets offered with the regular curriculum



AT CHURCH, AT HOME



suits a broader age range of kids in one class

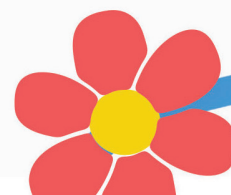
can teach the Bible Truth using some or all
of the 3 story parts, depending on
age range, time, and attention span.

great fit for a wide variety of
teaching opportunities

families can easily use at home
(Praise Factory Parent's Corner)



and it's
all **free!**



BOOKS:

Preachers in Print

BOOKS CAN:

- PROVIDE** language that conveys important Bible truths to kids.
- TEACH** adults these important truths, as they read with children.
- GIVE** adults helpful language to use with children in conversation, long after they've finished a book.

Good Christian books can be of great benefit to both children and adults. Most parents use books as partners in teaching their children gospel truths.

BOOKS:

Buyer Be Aware

BOOKS REFLECT THE AUTHOR'S/EDITOR'S:

THEOLOGY What they believe about God and what He says in His Word.

PEDAGOGY What kids can learn and how to best to teach them.

HERMANEUTICS How they study God's Word and apply its truths to us.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The author is writing for:

- a child who has never heard the gospel,
- a child who has heard the gospel, but is not a believer, and/or
- a child who knows and believes the gospel and is a believer.

Don't check your brains at the door, no matter who the author or publisher. Just like preachers, not all books are true to God's Word and the gospel. Be a Berean! Compare to Scripture!

BOOKS:

Top Three Troubles

False COMFORT

Fail to say God's promises are special comfort for God's people, not for everyone.

Forget CONVERSION

Fail to tell how to become one of God's people, and to know how these promises can be for them.

Forget CHANGE

Fail to say we must REPENT and believe to become one of God's people (not just believe).

Foster CONFUSION

These pitfalls are very common in Christian kids' books. Many assume the gospel is known and has already been accepted, while many kids still need to hear and respond. Unfortunately, this can lead to confusion that actually hinders the gospel in both kids and parents.

THE 3 P's

of a Great Kids' Book

God's Promises

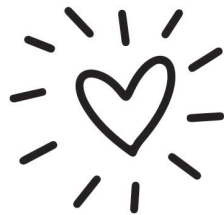
are for

God's People

God's Plan of

Salvation

*tells us that we can
become God's people when
we repent and trust in
Jesus as our Savior.*



*This is how God's promises
can be for us.*



WORDS

TO WATCH FOR



These Words:

"ME" "US" "WE" "YOU"
"GOD'S CHILDREN/PEOPLE"
"HEAVENLY FATHER"

Combined with

LANGUAGE OF BELONGING:

"ARE" "IS" "AM"

Or

LANGUAGE OF BECOMING:

"CAN BE" "IF" "WHEN"

WHICH IS THE BEST FIT?

Does the book use language of belonging or language of becoming? Which is most appropriate for your children? I find that when reading to a group of children, there's often a mixture of both. Better to change the language, if necessary, err on the "becoming" side, and add the gospel!



TAKE AWAY TIP #1



If Rhyme is King, You (Might) Miss Some Things

Rhymes are memorable and give a natural flow to reading. No wonder it's so popular to write kids' books this way... especially for little kids.

But the problem with rhyming books and conveying God's truth is that the best rhyming word isn't always the best word for explaining a truth. Too many times, an awkward word choice is made to keep the rhyme, making the important truth unclear. Be careful with rhyming books. Keep truth the king.





TAKE AWAY TIP #2



Reading to 3 Kids

When looking at a book, I like to think about reading to a group of 3 kids.



Kid #1 Has heard the gospel and knows Bible stories. I'm fairly sure this child is a Christian.

Kid #2 Has heard the gospel and knows Bible stories, but probably not a Christian.

Kid #3 Doesn't know the gospel or Bible stories at all and isn't a Christian.

Who would understand the text of the book and who is it truth for, as written? Frequently, books are written for Kid #1. What would be helpful to add in so that all would understand the gospel truths and be able to accept them for Kid #2 and #3?

Thinking about all three kids listening helps me make sure I'm holding out God's truths to all of them in an appropriate way.



TAKE AWAY TIP #3



Straight Line Scripts and Pitched Roof Promises

So many writers and publishers love to hold out God's special love and promises for His people to everyone who reads their books!

They choose to use words of "belonging" and Bible promises that in original context were written to God's people. God loves you. God is always with you. God promises you this. etc. is the wording found in these books.

I call these "**Straight Line**" **Scripts**. They write and read smoothly and feel so comforting! But the truth is, they aren't really for kids unless they have been saved. (Think back to the 3 kids example.)

Sometimes, writers or publishers choose this approach because of paedobaptistic persuasion. But many times, it is because they have forgotten to be careful with their application of Scripture.

Straight Line Scripts

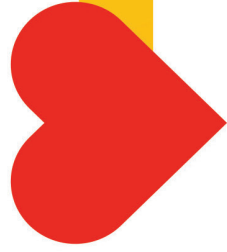


Use the Language of Belonging

“God loves you,
is near you,
cares for you,
did this for you”

“You/we are”
“These are yours”

plus any promise/Scripture that was
originally written to believers.



God’s
Special Love
and Promises
for His People



The 3 Kids

Is there another way to express God's special love for His people, available to kids through the gospel without confusing the need to repent and believe for these promises to be for them?

Yes, there is! I call it: **Pitched Roof Promises.**

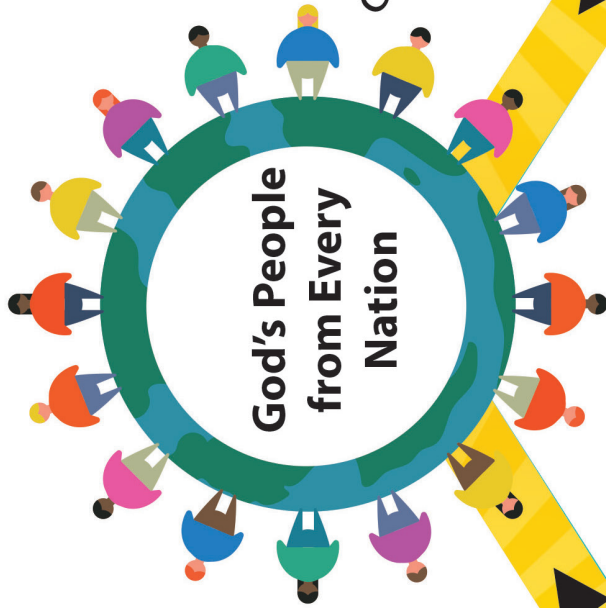
FIRST, you tell kids about God's wonderful love and promises for His people.

THEN, you tell them how they can become God's people, by repenting of their sins and trusting in Jesus as their Savior.

This approach uses the language of "becoming" instead of belonging: "These promises/God's special love for His people can be ours when we repent and believe the gospel (then, tell them the good news of Jesus)."

No, it doesn't slide off the tongue as smoothly as the Straight Line Script. But it's biblical and it doesn't confuse anyone or make false assurances, yet it opens the door of God's offer of salvation. The hearts of our kids are worth this extra step!

Pitched Roof Promises



#2:
Tell how they can
become God's people
and these promises
can be true for them.

Use the Language of Becoming

#1:
Tell of God's love
for His people.



**God's Special Love
and Promises
for His People**

God's love/these promises can
be/will be ours when we repent
and believe the gospel.



The 3 Kids



TAKE AWAY TIP #4



Kids' Books Sometimes Teach Kids; But They Always Teach Adults

The ability of kids' books to take big truths and express them faithfully to young minds is a great blessing to adults and to kids. Long ago I learned that the quickest way for me to understand a difficult concept quickly was by finding a good kids' book on the subject!

So it is that the books you read with your kids will probably teach you more than they teach your kids. The very act of reading aloud means you are engaging with the text in a way the listeners are not. Plus, as you read (and often re-read) a book to your kids, you're digesting language and truth that you can access at other times with your kids.



I especially think about this when I'm looking to give a book to another family. Remember the three kids? This time, think about three pairs of parents.

Pair #1: Are strong believers, who believe the gospel and know the Bible.

Pair #2: May have heard the gospel and know the Bible, but you don't really know if they are believers.

Pair #3: Do not believe the gospel and maybe have never even heard it or know the Bible.

Choose books according to where the adults are in their understanding of the gospel, the Bible, and their relationship to God.

This is a great way to commend the gospel to adults as well as their kids. And, it encourages those who are believers, while not confusing those who are not (yet) Christians.



TAKE AWAY TIP #5



Books and Drugs

Drugs come in three categories: over-the-counter, prescription medicines, and closely-controlled substances. I've found these same three categories helpful to me as I'm considering who to share a book with.

"Over-the-Counter" Books



These are books with truths presented in a way that are true for whoever reads them; or, contain not only God's Promises, but also God's Plan of Salvation that tells us how we can become God's People and these Promises true for us (the 3 P's).

I don't need to know you for this book to be useful and clear to you. Just pick it up and go!

“Prescription” Books



These are books with truths presented in a way that might be true/appropriate for some readers, but not others. It might not have all 3 P's. It might be written in a way that would be encouraging to certain some but discouraging to others. It might presume a certain level of spiritual maturity, etc.

I need to know you before I would recommend this book because I want it to be appropriate and good for you/your kids.

“Closely-Controlled Substances Books



These are books that need special handling and careful recommendation.

They may offer much needed, helpful advice in difficult circumstances, with particularly discerning parents.

Unfortunately, the good counsel in these books may be tangled up in the middle of secular presuppositions that take a lot of maturity and discernment to glean the good and filter out the bad.

Not only would I want to know you and your situation well but would want to sit down and talk through the hesitations as well as the benefits of the book before giving it out. And probably set up a time to discuss it more after the book is read.

Over-the-counter, prescription, and closely-controlled substances.

I find these three drug categories help me choose well which books to share with people so, as they say in the Hippocratic oath, **“to do no harm”**.



TAKE AWAY TIP #6



The 3 P's: The Water You Swim In, Not Drown In

As much as I wish all 3 P's (**God's Promises** for those who are **God's People** through **God's Plan of Salvation**) were present in every book, it's just not going to be the case.

But does that mean you need to "drown" your kids with the 3 P's every time they aren't present? I would suggest a broader view. If your family regularly "swims" at church and/or at home in gospel truths and the riches God gives His people through Jesus, then you may not need to bring them up every time.

How often would I add in the 3 P's, if they are missing? It depends on the focus of the book. If it's a book dedicated to comforting kids with God's promises, clearly only true for God's people, I would want to add them into the text as I read; or, I would "test the waters" by asking the kids: "Who are these promises for?"



TAKE AWAY TIP #7



Script, Springboard, or Sleuth

Here are 3 great ways to use books with your kids.



#1: Script

Simply read the book. It's great the way it is.

#2: Springboard

The book has some issues, but the story/material is presented in a way to foster great conversations with your kids.



Add discussion questions such as, "What do you think about what Harry did? What would you do in that situation? Does God's Word tell us anything about how He wants us to act?" **OR** "Who do you think these promises were written for? How can they be for us?"



#3: Sleuth

The book has some issues, but you can use them to teach your kids discernment. Your kids are going to need to not just know the truth, but to be able to discern it from the many lies this world throws at them every day. Encourage them to be sleuths who carefully listen and examine what is being said to find out what is true.

Pause after sentences that are unclear/untrue. Ask the kids: "Do you think that's true? Is that what God's Word says? How would you re-word this to be true?"



CHOOSE

How to Help a Book



Keep the Book, Change the Language

Modify the text or add in any missing “P’s.”

Keep the Book, Change the Use

Use the book as a discussion starter in family devotions. Build discernment by asking your kids questions such as, “Who are these promises for?” Or, “Kids, what did you think of what I just read. Would you agree or disagree with it? Why?”

Keep the Book, Change the Reader to YOU

Glean helpful truths of language to use with your kids to incorporate into your own speech.

Change Books

Find another book with better text.

★ Connie's ★



**Ridiculously long,
extremely helpful,
sometimes opinionated,
gospel rich, annual,
list of
Christian books
for kids and parents**

**CHBC Kids'
Book Event**



Here's my humble, yearly attempt at finding good books with the 3 P's. Take a look!

WHO WE ARE

CHBC Demographics

812 Members

163 Families

Most members are 25-40 years old

MEMBERS' CHILDREN

57

0-23 months

92

2-5 year olds (preschool)

100

5-9 year olds (early elementary)

31

10-12 year olds (later elementary)

50

13-18 year olds (junior/senior high)

plus, an additional 10% children of visitors

Capitol Hill Baptist Church: Seeking the Conversion of Our Children

We believe that Scripture clearly teaches that parents have the primary responsibility to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

This includes parents teaching their children about God, disciplining them, and striving to honor God before them by the example of their lives. The Children's Ministry team here at CHBC sees itself as a support team to parents. It seeks to aid and encourage parents in the nurturing of their children, in accordance with Scripture and the vision of our God-given elders.

Before we get to what our support of parents looks like, it is helpful to first tell you a bit about our parents and our philosophy of children's ministry.

Our CHBC Parents

The vast majority of the parents here at CHBC take this charge to raise their children very, very seriously. They read to their children, they memorize Scripture with them, they pray with them and for them. They discipline them, and strive to live godly lives that glorify God before them.

This is a great blessing to the children, to their families and to those here at church who work with their children. And how wonderful it is to work with children who are so well taught!

The Caution

But with all this diligence, there is an important word of warning we give to both the parents and the teachers of these children:

Doing all these things educates the children and fertilizes their souls with the great things of God, but they neither guarantee nor bring about conversion!

Conversion is a work of the Holy Spirit alone! There is no "to-do list" which, when completed, guarantees that their children will come to a saving knowledge of God. Nor are there any certain three behaviors, if cultivated, guarantee that they will live godly lives. And unfortunately, sometimes knowledge of more facts--even Bible facts and Bible verses-- can breed arrogance, just as much as lack of facts can lead to ignorance. And good behavior--even good, Christian behavior--can breed legalism, just as lack of discipline can breed selfishness and foolishness.

So what do we do? Do we hold back on how much we teach the children about God? Do we stop trying to build good, godly character in their lives? Of course not! And yet, how can we best help our parents and teachers fill young minds with the great things of God, while trying to avoid arrogance? How do we train them in selflessness and godliness, while trying to avoid legalism? And, as those who so deeply desire the conversion of these children, how do we eagerly hold out the gospel to them, yet rest in our good God who alone can change their hearts.

Psalm 66 has become our Children's Ministry Team's favorite scriptural reminder on these things. It points to four fundamentals that lie behind what we do and how we do it.

CHBC: Four Fundamentals from Psalm 66

#1 Live joyful lives.

"Shout for joy to God, all the earth." Psalm 66:1, ESV

We can live joyful lives in light of what God has done. True joy is a gift of the Spirit. It is remarkable. It cannot be reproduced by any other religion. It reflects the Spirit of God working within us, giving life where there was death. It is living in faith, despite trials and despite having to let go of what the world holds to be true and dear. And so, as we teach and parent, we ask God to make our joy in Him evident. It is a very potent witness of the truth and power of the gospel to the children watching us.

#2 Live to glorify God in all things...regardless of the outcome!

"Sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! ... All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name." Psalm 66:2,3,4, ESV

We live to glorify God in all that we do. We do not have control over the conversion of the children who we love, parent, and teach. Their conversion is a work of God's Holy Spirit that we pray for and yearn for, but we cannot use it as the measure of success. On the other hand, seeking to glorify God in how we teach, raise and live among the children is a "success" we can strive for. This is freeing! We can strive to please God as we declare the greatness of His name to these children. We can strive to please God as we do, to the best of our ability, all He calls us to do, including raising these children. It makes teaching and parenting yet another venue for glorifying God, regardless of who is converted. And, it makes conversion a matter of trust in God...just where it should be.

#3 Teach the children God's awesome works, as revealed in the Bible.

"Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man." Psalm 66:5, ESV

From before the creation of the world, God has had one, big plan to redeem His people as a magnificent display of His glory. We read of it in the Bible—the record of "His awesome works on man's behalf." And so, the Bible is our primary "textbook" for teaching our children about God, and for how we parent. The Bible is central to all we do and long to teach the children.

#4 Tell the children the gospel that has saved us and can save them.

"Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip... Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul. I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!"

Psalms 66:8-9, 16-20, ESV

As Christians, God has given us grace to hear and believe the gospel. We have repented of our sins and trusted in Him as our Savior. We have the testimony of His good work in our lives...and so, as we teach and parent, we want to testify to the children of God's work in our own lives. This is not a God only of history and past acts. This is the living God who is at work today...and in us! What a story we have to tell these children, every day, of the God whose mercies to us are new every morning!

These are the four fundamentals of how we try to teach children and how we encourage our parents in their spiritual nurturing of their children.

CHBC: Where We Live Affects Who We Are

Life in Washington, DC

Capitol Hill Baptist Church is located in Washington, DC, just a few blocks behind the Capitol. It is a vibrant city, that takes much of its life from the people who come here to take part in our nation's government, as well as many stationed here in military positions. It has an unusually high number of young adults in their 20's. DC is a very transient city, with both politicians and their staff coming and going, as well as military postings that usually last no more than three years. It is also a city of many internationals, coming either for college or for work.

Housing prices are very high. Public schools are not the best (though they are getting better), and the price of private school would astound you. While our church has an unusual number of families who somehow find a way to live close to the church in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, many families wind up moving out to the suburbs for the better, public school and somewhat cheaper housing prices by the time their children reach school age.

The personality of the city is reflected in our church. We have a high percentage of young, unmarried/newly married members. Chances are they will move out of the area within three years. We turn over a third of our 900+ membership every few years. Those that do stay are enthusiastic about their families. Many of them have three or more children. We average about 100 babies born each year. These babies have about 100 preschool siblings, 100 elementary school siblings, and about 50 siblings in middle school and high school. Campus Outreach is based out of our church. Largely through them, around 100 college students attend/become members during their time in college.

We may be heavy in young singles, married, with or without children, but we are "light" in older adults of the empty-nest and older variety. This number is growing as our congregation ages, but we still only have about members, ages forty and older.

Our Leadership

We are an elder-led (not elder-ruled) congregational church. We have 30 elders, as well as 30 deacons who care for the congregation. We have one senior pastor, five associate pastors, two assistant pastors, plus several pastoral assistants. We have a full-time, paid Children's Ministry Administrator, a part-time Curriculum Developer/Teacher Trainer, as well as four deacons who support these paid workers and help the member volunteer teachers on Sundays. I (Connie Dever) spend much of my days developing curriculum, but am unpaid.

Our Membership

You must be a member to join in most of the activities of the church. This is not trying to be exclusive, but it is because we are serious about the covenant we make together. We commit our lives to each other. We live under the loving care of our pastors. We try to actively live out the promises to disciple each other and to encourage each other in whatever callings God has given us, including the raising of our children.

Our Services and Other Programs

We gather together as one body, each Sunday morning for about an hour of music, prayers and Bible reading, followed by an hour long, expositional sermon. We meet together again on Sunday evenings for more worship, an extended time of prayer and sharing, and a shorter message (15 minutes) from the opposite testament of the Bible from the morning service, but on a related passage/theme. These

evening services are attended by a majority of our membership and provide a wonderful way to bind our lives together and encourage us in the faith in a more intimate fashion than the morning services.

We also have Core Seminar (Sunday School classes) for adults before the Sunday morning worship service, as well as a Wednesday night inductive Bible study. Many members are also involved in small groups (only men or women) or community groups (men and women). The elders have chosen for the church schedule to remain light from other programs. They want the members to have time to care for their families and build relationships with others, especially non-Christians. Members also meet up less formally to enjoy, disciple and encourage one another.

CHBC: Family-Equipping, Not Family-Integrated

We see parents as the primary spiritual caregivers of their children. They are the ones whom the Lord will judge for the spiritual nurture of their children. We see all of children's ministry as only a humble support to godly parents; and, that any way we can help prepare the children in our church to gather well with our local body of Christ as one of the most important ways we support our parents in this God-ordained task.

We agree on the goal of deliberate, parent-led spiritual nurturing, yet within our church we have seen that the way parents choose to best fulfill this task varies from family to family and even from child to child. And, we have seen that this variance is a matter of godly discretion. In other words, we do not prescribe one particular method, when there seem to be several godly options that bear good fruit. So, we encourage parents to understand the great importance of spiritual nurturing their children, both at home and at church. We offer various kinds of support to the parents. And, we help them consider what might be the best way to do this for their particular children/their particular family. So as you can see, we agree upon the mandate, but will not divide over enforcing only one particular godly method.

No one can doubt that children have many cognitive and developmental differences from adults: the younger the children, the greater these differences. Nor can it be doubted that there is a wide variety of spiritual maturity among parents. While some parents may be mature saints, many are new converts. They are hungry to be fed and eagerly welcome help in teaching biblical truths to their children. Teachers of children with this kind of parent often help teach the parents how to better spiritually nurture their children as well as teach the children, themselves. There are yet other children coming to our church whose parents who are not Christians and may not even attend church at all. The teachers of these children may provide some of the only spiritual feeding they receive.

For all of these reasons, many parents at our church feel that they are serving their children best by supplementing their own daily spiritual nurturing of their children with special Sunday classes that convey biblical truths on their own level. This is particularly true while the children are young and the cognitive and developmental gap between themselves and the adults is especially large. And of course, for the children of non-Christians, these classes—presented on their level-- may be the best opportunity they have to understand and remember the gospel and other biblical truths.

And so, we endeavor to encourage and support our parents in a number of different, appropriate ways, helping them to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

What exactly does this look like at our church? It takes on a few different forms. We have some parents who feel that it is best and even biblical for their children to be taught only by themselves. Their children do not attend Sunday School or Church hour programs offered at our church. They feel that regardless of age or ability to understand the sermon or other elements of the service, they are best fulfilling their God-given duties by raising their children this way. These parents choose to keep their children with them from birth on up. But even these parents are not partnering without us. The sermons and other teaching they hear informs their own hearts and minds and helps them to better train their own children.

We have another set of parents who choose to partner with other godly church members to teach their children biblical truths during the Sunday School hour, yet choose to keep their children with them during the entire church service. They often use Sunday lunch time to review key points from the sermon and church service with their children.

And we have yet another set of parents who choose to partner with godly church members to teach their preschoolers and early elementary school children not just during Sunday School, but also during all/part of the church service, too. The K-4th graders of these parents are in the church service until the sermon time (we have hour-long sermons), when they leave to participate in The Praise Factory. Some parents of preschoolers follow this same model, while others choose to have their children to participate in their own teaching time during the whole church service. These parents feel that the quality teaching offered at their child's developmental level in our church hour programs provides a helpful supplement with their own teaching of their children. They do not see the teachers as usurpers of their responsibilities, but partners who are helping to lay a theological foundation that will help their children understand and be better prepared to gather with the congregation. Teachers are careful to give feedback to the parents about any behavior issues or spiritual conversations that might be particularly helpful for the parents to know about. We also provide take home sheets and other parents resources so that parents know what their children were taught and can engage with them about these truths at home. Teachers and parents also watch for signs of readiness to join the service for the sermon portion, too. So, even though a child is age-eligible to be in a Church Hour program, sometimes we encourage the parents to go ahead and begin keeping their child in with them for the sermon and see if they are ready. Gathering together is always our ultimate goal.

Because of this, we steer clear of calling any of the programs we offer a "Children's Church." They are really just children's classes that we hold during the Sunday morning service. We want to reserve the name "church" for the gathering of the congregation all together. It is this gathering we are preparing all the children to join for the full duration, as they are ready, and certainly by the time they start 4th grade.

So, you can see that we have a wide variety of parents, all taking seriously their responsibility to be the primary spiritual caretakers of their children but doing it in several different ways. That while we offer programs during the church hour, we are not advocates of children's church. And, that while we are always trying to prepare children to gather with the congregation for the entire service, we provide quality, biblical teaching during all or the sermon portion of the service, for the children of parents who feel it is spiritually beneficial for them to have that, through 4th grade.

We believe this family EQUIPPING model of the local church is the biblical model. The "family" we are integrated into is the membership of the local church, as we live out our covenant vows to encourage one another and help raise those under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

CHBC: Children's Ministry Overview

Elders Set Goals

Our Children's Ministry priorities reflect the elders' goals to provide:

- the most child-care help for those parents who will be least likely to hear because of their children's ages/abilities.
- teaching that will support, but not usurp the parents' biblical training of their children.
- what will be taught in those classes (Bible, Theology, Discipleship, etc.) and what curriculum will be used to teach it.
- separate teaching for younger children who might be less likely to understand the sermon.
- programs that by their content, and by the age-limitations to whom they are offered, will create an up-ramp to gathering together with the whole congregation.

Reflects the Needs and Opportunities of Our Own Community

They also reflect the realities of our community. For instance, we hold a one-day, Saturday VBS instead of the traditional full-week version because that's what works best for outreach here on Capitol Hill. And, we do not offer child-care of any kind during our Wednesday evening service because most families typically stay at home on Wednesday nights, either because of school schedules or because they live so far away.

Respect for Differences

Many of our families homeschool, though an increasing number have their children in public (usually Charter) schools or Christian (especially hybrid) schools. At church, we have many parents who include their children in classes/child-care and many who do not. We encourage parents to not set up strongholds of opinions about either of these issues, acting like their school or worship-participation choice is the only right way. We agree on the essentials of the gospel. We allow for Christian freedom everywhere else.

Quick to Share Gospel, Slow to Baptize Children

We are quick to share the gospel (in every sermon and every Bible class), but slow to baptize children. The elders have found that it is best for children to be encouraged to grow and become known more broadly within the church as a Christian because pleasing adults can easily mimic conversion in children. This is NOT because the elders think that children cannot become Christians. Many became Christians as children, themselves. It is out of care for the children's souls and for the purity of the church that they have made this decision.

Anyone who is baptized becomes a full member of the church. They go through membership classes like everyone else. Because this can be a hot topic with parents, the elders give out their thought-paper on this decision for them to read and understand before they join the church. Better to be up-front about this, then to get what may feel like an unwelcome surprise later.

Safe Child Care

We make safe childcare a top priority. Only members can be child-care workers/teachers. They must be members at least six months before they can serve the children. This is for the volunteers' good, giving them time to get settled into the church body. It is also for the good of the children. We want to know our teachers before they spend time in childcare with the children. Every childcare candidate is required to fill out a child-care application form, to attend a child-care workshop and to under-go a background screening. In the nursery/classroom, everyone keeps to the child protection policy, including important elements such that no teacher will be alone with the children at any time. The child protection policy was created under the supervision of the elders.

Resources at Home

We know that they are the primary spiritual caregivers of their children. We realize that parents have far more time at home with their children than we will ever have with them at church. But there's a lot we can do to support them as they teach at home. We try to support parents by teaching them well in their own classes and by the preaching of God's Word. We offer them book lists and hold book fairs of great books to use with their children. We pray for them by use of our members' directory. We provide take-home sheets and online resources that go with the curriculum we teach in the children's classes.

Teaching Them Well at Church

The Children's Ministry team takes the elders' teaching recommendations and puts them into practice. They seek out good curriculum and good teachers to bring these biblical truths to life in ways that are understandable, enjoyable and memorable. One elder in particular oversees Children's Ministry and helps them as they carry out the elders' recommendations. He also is there to help with difficult situations that arise with parents and children. He cares for the Children's Ministry team and ensures they are being spiritually well-fed, themselves. He keeps the other elders abreast of what is going on in Children's Ministry and seeks their advice on any matters as needed.

Supporting Teachers

Teachers teach in over-sized teams which include more teachers than are needed to teach at a time. This allows us to put more experienced and less experienced teachers together. It also allows for someone to serve as a teacher but not be "chained" every single Sunday to teach. This provides for vacation time, illness and an opportunity to attend classes/worship services. It goes a long way to prevent burn-out. We also provide teachers with opportunities to be mentored, to be observed, to observe someone else teaching their class, and workshops to improve their teaching skills. Hall monitors and deacons are on hand every Sunday to help teachers with any last-minute needs that arise or with escorting children to the bathroom.

Caring Well for Our Volunteers

About a third of our church is involved in childcare of babies or in teaching children. Since the elders want to make sure teachers are well-fed, they have set limits on how frequently teachers can teach. This is especially true for any teaching for children (as well as childcare for babies) that takes place during the worship services. What happens if we have a consistent problem with filling teaching/childcare slots with volunteers, given the elders' limits? First, the issue is brought to the attention of the congregation.

If the pattern persists, and enough new volunteers cannot be found, the elders choose to shut down particular classes. These remain unavailable until a time when we have enough volunteers to fill those slots in a sustainable way. The elders give childcare/teaching provided during worship services as the top priority to fill. Child-care during the services may make a big difference in helping some parents learn from God's Word, and therefore, giving them better spiritual food to feed their whole family. They are willing to make up for a consistent shortfall in volunteers by closing other child-care offerings. A few years ago, they shut down Sunday School classes for a year when our volunteer numbers were too low to ensure enough teachers/childcare workers during the worship service times. When the volunteer numbers came back up to a sustainable level, Sunday School was added back, grade by grade.

Pastors: Our Children's Ministry Leaders

Pastors are God's appointed overseers of the local church. They are in a unique position to protect the flock from unbiblical teaching and unhealthy practices, even down to the youngest child under their care.

ALL OF OUR PASTORS

Always Pray

During elders' meetings, on their own, with parents, CM workers.

Frequently Teach/Preach

Speak to parents, children, all members about caring for families, in addition to teach all that they may better go and feed those they have.

Sometimes Serve

Some elders serve in child-care, teach kids' classes, or lead youth group.

Listen to Learn

Humbly listen to and learn that they might make the best decisions that care for all.

Oversee & Decide

Elders make decisions about programs, child protection policy, serving limits, difficult parenting issues, baptism of children, etc.

ONE, DESIGNATED STAFF PASTOR

Special Oversight

On-staff pastor is given oversight of CM. Is liaison between CM and the other pastors.

Weekly Check-in

Meets with CMA each week to review, plan and otherwise guide.

Cares for CM Team

Manages CM team so they are regularly in the service and are not overworked.

Does the Tough Stuff

Reaches out to parents regarding their child's pattern of difficult behavior issues in the classroom.

Watchfulness Over Teaching

Evaluates curriculum/handle concerns regarding volunteers' soundness in teaching.

Eternal Encouragement

Encourages CM staff, volunteers, and parents of the eternal value of their care of the kids.

Carrying Out Our Pastors' Vision for Children's Ministry

Pastors encourage the whole church to support families in various ways, but in a way that does not overburden anyone. Their leadership encourages service, yet within healthy limits that protect the spiritual good of everyone.

CM Administrator

01

Staff member who coordinates carrying out the elders' vision for CM.

Preps curriculum and classrooms, encourages families.

Provides elders with helpful information to make good decisions about CM and families.

Other CM Leaders

02

Other paid or unpaid members who play a key role in training teachers, writing curriculum, and facilitate other CM elements or events.

Deacon/esses

03

Godly men and women recognized to serve CM needs for 3-year terms.

1 Deacon of Recruitment

1 Deacon of CM

3 Deaconesses of Childcare

Fellow Members

04

Serve within limits set by elders to meet the needs of CM.

Recruits "oversized" teaching teams that rotate teaching, creating built-in subs, hands-on teacher training, and time off to attend the worship service or their own classes. (e.g., a team of 6 with only 2 teaching at a time)

Programs

05

Set by pastors

Support, not replace, parents.

Ebb and flow according to volunteer base, family needs.

A program must have volunteers to fill 6 months' worth of classes before being seen as sustainable.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

A 4-Part Church Family Affair

Covenant Keepers: **Caring Community**

01

- regular reciting of covenant
- regular prayer for one another
- honest conversation about life
- deliberate discipleship, care, and involvement in each other's lives

From the Pulpit:

02

Preaching for All

- make Sunday bulletin with songs & scriptures available ahead of time for family preparation & worship
- address parents, kids during sermon
- kids' bulletins
- cry rooms with video feed
- nursing mothers' area with video feed

Home Resources:

03

Support that Extends All Week

- annual book fair
- take-home sheets for curriculum
- regular book giveaways for parents and kids
- church library

Classes at Church:

04

Custom Teaching

- safe childcare
- age-specific classes for kids
- classes for adults (parenting and Biblical truth)

Make the Most of What You Can Do

While different sized church may be limited in age-specific classes they can provide for kids, there is still so much they can do to promote Children's Ministry and support families. Every church can support families the other three ways. Make the most of what you can do, and pray for opportunities to do more!

CHBC: What Covid Taught Us

Closed Doors

When Covid struck hard in D.C., the mayor ordered churches to halt all gatherings, indoor and outdoor. Determined to gather, CHBC found accomodating churches outside of the district to hold our regular Sunday am and pm services.

Constant Kids

Under normal conditions, we would have provided child care or classes for kids, ages birth to high school. But, of course, these were not normal conditions. The opportunity to teach them Bible truths and point them to Jesus, through age-specific classes was on hold. All the kids were in the gathering, all the time. Many families kept their kids appropriately social-distanced from others. Was there no place for Children's Ministry during these times?

The Surprising New Perspective

The answer was yes. There was a place for Children's Ministry during these times. The ironic thing is that it wasn't a change in Children's Ministry. It was a change in perspective. We came to see more clearly what we've always believed but never were forced to clearly see until Covid took away our classes.

The Four Parts of Children's Ministry

The answer was yes. There was a place for Children's Ministry during these times. The ironic thing is that it wasn't a change in Children's Ministry. It was a change in perspective. We came to see more clearly what we've always believed but never were forced to clearly see until Covid took away our classes.

Children's Ministry Part 1: Child Care/Age-Specific Classes for Kids

As mentioned, this is the one that comes to mind when you think of Children's Ministry. It's the one that makes parents smile as they hand off their child so they can soak in teaching in their own classes or the worship service (for up to 3rd grade, at CHBC). It can be extremely valuable time with the kids, especially for those who have non-Christian or young-in-their-faith Christian parents. It's also the part of Children's Ministry that requires all the curriculum, the prep, the teacher volunteers and training. When there aren't enough volunteers or budget, it's where the squeeze is felt. Big churches can have big offerings, while small churches chafe under their inability to fully satisfy everything parents might hope the church would provide. No wonder this is what everyone thinks of with Children's Ministry. Praise God, there's a lot more than this!

Children's Ministry Part 2: Covenant Keepers

At CHBC, membership is extremely important. It is a commitment to how we intend to help one another worship God and love one another. One way we regularly remember this commitment is through regularly reciting and remembering our Church Covenant. While there is one phrase specifically having to do with helping one another with the raising of our children ("We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends. (Deut. 6:1-12; 11:18-20; Matt 6:6; Eph 6:4; Mk 5:19; Lk 5:19; Matt 5:16; Eph 5:15), really, we've found that there's no part of the covenant that does not impact reaching our kids with the gospel. As Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35). We have found this deliberate, caring community has been a very powerful part of Children's Ministry. Sometimes, I think it's been the most powerful, as children see the gospel made visible in the lives of God's people. Being a caring community of Covenant Keepers is something that Covid could not shut down.

Children's Ministry Part 3: Home Help

We've always seen putting great resources in the hands of parents as a very important part of Children's Ministry. Not only are parents the primary, spiritual caregivers of their children, they also have far more time and opportunity with their children. After all, even if a child were to attend every class we offer for their age, that would only be a few hours a week of their time. And so, our pastors regularly give out books for parents or kids at the beginning of Sunday evening service to be used at home. It's also why I work so hard on the booklist and book preview of kids' books each year. Books can have such a huge and long-lasting impact on teaching both parents and kids. And, it is another part of Children's Ministry that Covid could not shut down.

Children's Ministry Part 4: Gleaning from the Gathering

But perhaps it was our preaching pastors that we saw change the most through Covid and the closing of classes. Realizing that the worship service, especially the sermon, was all the kids' main teaching time at church, raised their intentionality with applications for them. Previously, some of the pastors might have addressed the kids in their sermons. But with Covid, every pastor began to do this. And they still do. We also have added the bulletin to the upcoming service so families can read through the scriptures and sing the songs ahead of time. This was all we had during Covid. But now, these practices continue to be additions that are helpful to our families. Helping our children gather meaningfully with God's people is not only the GOAL of Children's Ministry, but also PART of Children's Ministry.

Encouragement, Especially for Churches with Limited Resources

Do you see that THREE of the four parts of Children's Ministry are not limited by volunteer numbers, building size, or budget? They are a regular part of the local church, living and gathering together. So, yes, pray, plan and provide age-specific classes for your children. These are of great value. But don't be discouraged that you have no "Children's Ministry" if you can't do what the big church down the road can pull off. Trust the Lord. Make the most of what you have. Encourage one another to help each other grow and to impact each other's kids with the gospel. And watch what the Lord does.

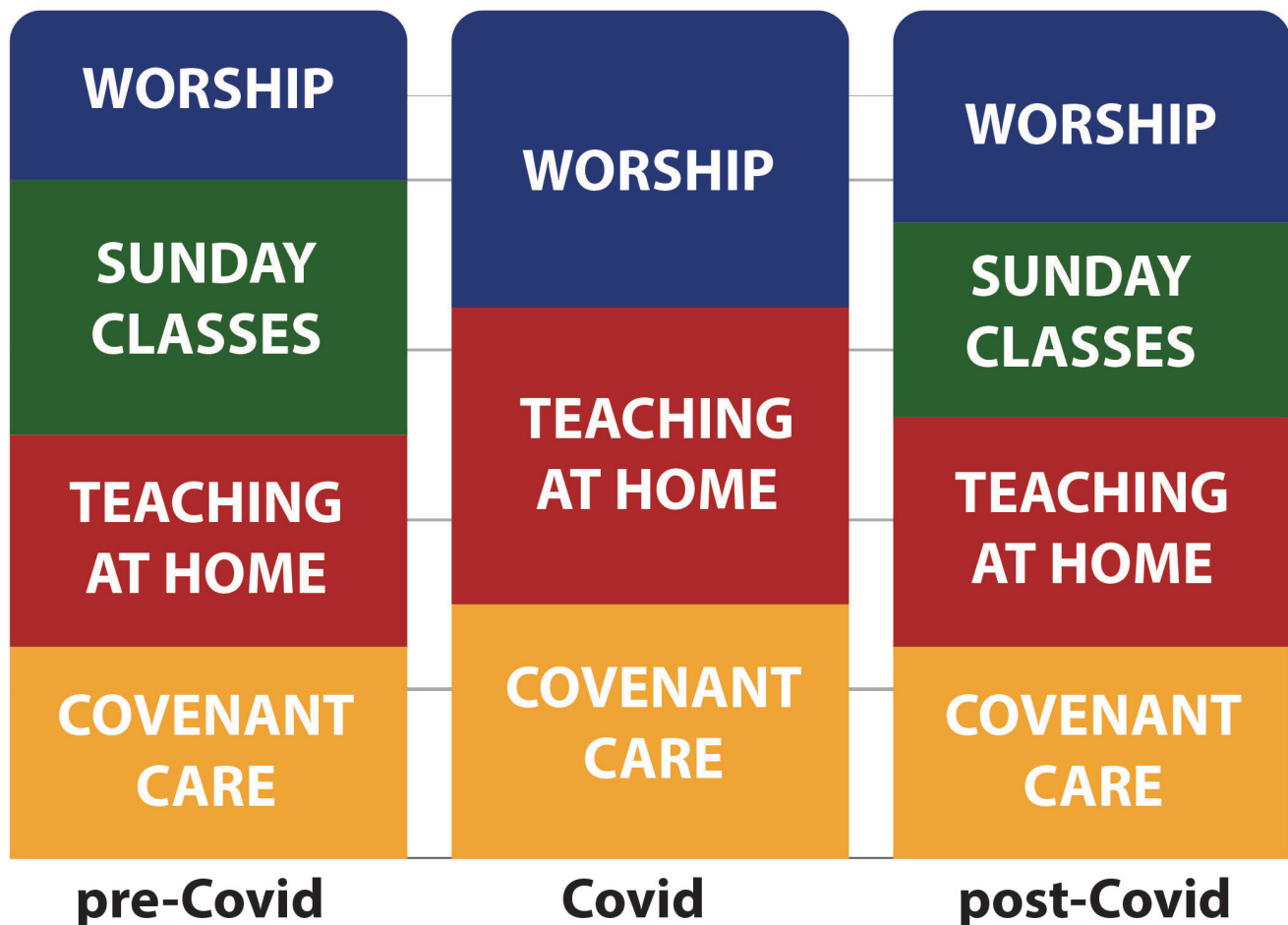
LESSONS FROM COVID

The Changing Face of Faithfulness

Even when classes were not possible, our pastors/elders led us in responding with appropriate changes to care well for everyone and encourage spiritual growth in families.

We learned to appreciate that Children's Ministry is far more than just the Sunday classes. It's what happens at home, in the worship service, and between members, as they live out their covenant promises to one another.

Not even Covid closings could stop these powerful aspects of supporting parents and nurturing the children in our church.



What Families Used to Nurture Their Children

The Path to Gathering Together at Capitol Hill Baptist Church

What We Did Pre-Covid, What We Are Striving to Get Back To

Why the Elders Care to Create a Path

The elders hope that all children, 4th grade and up will be a part of all the worship services. For children under that age, they have provided options for children to gradually be a part of the worship services. This “ramp-up” approach helps children become familiar with gathering together with the congregation, but is mindful that developmentally the whole service (especially the hour long sermons) might be too much for some.

Many Roads Lead to the Same Place

While the elders have set age limits that are the guiderails along what they think is a good path to gathering together, there are almost as many variations as there are parents in terms of how to get there.

Here’s some of the variations the parents of these younger children use:

Sunday Morning:

- Include their children in all available child-care/Bible classes. These families will be fully using the “guide-rails” set by the elders for ramping up to gathering together with the congregation.
- Sunday School classes, then join for full worship service.
- Sunday School, then join for the entire, 45 minutes of singing, prayers, Bible readings, then go to their class during the sermon.
- Sunday School, then join for the first 15 minutes of preparation music (just singing), then go to their class.
- Parents will pick up a children’s worship bulletin that we provide, or bring along their own version of one, to help the children engage in the service.

Sunday Evening:

- Include their children in child-care/Bible classes through the whole service.
- Join for the first 15 minutes of singing, then go to child care/class.
- Stay in for the whole service.

Preparing to Gather Together through Elements of Classroom Time

There are a number of ways we prepare our younger children in their classroom time to gather together with the whole congregation:

- Introduce hymns and songs that will be used in our worship services. Not only do we teach the music, but we also explain the meaning of the lyrics.
- Pray prayers using the ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) model to introduce the children about the types of prayers that will be used in the worship service.
- Use Bible story sermons, which are much shorter than the expositional preaching they will hear in the main worship service, yet still echoes the teaching model.
- Take time to go through the worship service bulletin, either before or after a service, and help them understand the aspects of the service.

Preparing to Gather Together by What Families Do at Home

- Our church has a sermon card that lets the congregation know what passage will be preached on. Some families read the passage together ahead of time, preparing their hearts for the pastor’s sermon on Sunday.
- Many take home and use the worship bulletins to sing together at home.

The elders have chosen to stagger class offerings to create the up-ramp for gathering together:

Sunday School Hour:

- **ages 0-2** childcare (no teaching)
- **ages 2-3:** Hide 'n' Seek Kids (Praise Factory 1 "Theology" Bible truths)
- **ages 4-preschool 5:** Deep Down Detectives (Praise Factory 2 "Theology" Bible truths)
- **K5-4th grade (5-10 year olds):** Pre-Covid: Treasuring Christ Post-Covid: Gospel Project/The Biggest Story (Old Testament/New Testament Overview)
- **5th-6th grade (11-12 year olds):** Seeking Wisdom (Inductive Bible Study)
- **7th-12th grade (13-18 year olds):** Youth Core Seminars (Variety of topics for growing as a Christian.)

"Ramp-up" Notes for Sunday School:

- Child care/Bible teaching does not interfere with worship service, so it is offered for all ages.
- In Praise Factory classes, the children learn songs and prayers that will help them better gather together with the whole church. The stories used are more like story sermons, helping them prepare for more in-depth preaching in the worship service.

Sunday Morning: One, Main Preaching Worship Service:

- **ages 0-2** childcare (no teaching)
- **ages 2** childcare (no teaching)
- **ages 3:** Hide 'n' Seek Kids, pt. 2 (Praise Factory 1 "theology" Bible truths)
- **ages 4-preschool 5:** Deep Down Detectives, pt. 2 (Praise Factory 2 "theology" Bible truths)
- **K5-3rd grade (5-9 year olds):** participate in worship service and are dismissed before the sermon for a separate teaching time. Praise Factory Investigators (Praise Factory 3 "theology" Bible truths)
- **ages 4th grade and up (10+ year olds):** in the service the entire time

"Ramp-up" Notes for Sunday Morning Worship Service:

- Two year olds just have play time. One teaching time during Sunday School is plenty for these kids.
- Three year olds, four and five years olds continue with Praise Factory curriculum that we have stretched over the Sunday School/Worship Hour and stuck play times in between, so both Sunday School kids and those who only come to church will get teaching.
- Worship bulletins are provided to help the K5-7th graders learn more during this service.
- Younger elementary school comes in for the the first part of the worship service (first 35 minutes) to gather together with congregation.
- In Praise Factory classes, the children learn songs and prayers that will help them better gather together with the whole church. The stories used are more like story sermons, helping them prepare for more in-depth preaching in the worship service.
- Teachers and parents look for signs of readiness for kids to stay in the service and encourage this.

Sunday Evening Church-wide Prayer/Share Meeting:

- **ages 0-preschool 5:** child care/Bible classes for the ENTIRE SERVICE
- **ages K5-8:** participate in singing time of the worship service and are dismissed for a separate teaching time. Great Commission Club (Missions)
- **ages 3rd grade and up (10+ year olds):** in the service the entire time.

Note on class during evening service:

- Younger elementary school comes in for the the first part of the worship service (first 15 minutes) to gather together with congregation.
- Because this service has a shorter preaching time; and, the sharing/praying content is more assessable to younger children, we lower the age limit on this class by another year down to 2nd grade (from the 3rd grade age limit for Praise Factory which takes place during the morning sermon).

Five Ways to Help Parents Take Spiritual Responsibility for Their Kids

Parenting Classes

We offer a parenting class every year in our Sunday School hour, as well as special workshops held throughout the year targeting parents with kids within specific age ranges.

Preaching

We post the Scriptures to be preached on in advance so families can be reading and thinking about them in advance. We provide kid worship bulletins to help them engage. The pastors address kids and parents in their preaching.

Take Home Resources

We provide take-home sheets for all our classes so parents can reinforce learning at home. And, we have a quarterly newsletter sent to parents to let them know what their children will be learning and any other special events.

Booklists and Book Give Aways

We update a booklist of great kids' and parenting books each year and give many of them away in our evening service and at a yearly book event.

Discipleship

Our pastors regularly encourage the congregation to live out their covenant with one another by helping each other grow in discipleship, including parenting their children.

Five Ways to Help Parents “Parent in the Pew”

Scripture & Songs Ahead of Time

Post the scriptures to be preached on as well as recordings of songs to be sung on the church website. This allows parents to read the Scripture, discuss it, and prepare their children ahead of time for what they will hear. They can also sing the songs with their kids and discuss the meaning of the words.

Worship Bulletins

Provide simple worship bulletins to help the children engage in the worship service. And, if nothing else, give them something to write on other than the offering envelopes. (Truth 78 also has a wonderful resource that can be used in any service.)

Family Rooms

Offer family rooms for parents with noisier, wigglier children to still be in the service, without distracting others.

Preach to Kids

Pastors can address the kids with something to think about or ask their parents about at home.

Kids' Classes

Use the kids' classes to teach them truths, prayers, and songs that will equip them to be able to understand and engage with the worship service.

Four Thoughts on Knowing If a Child Is Converted

Only God Sees the Heart

Only God truly knows the depths of anyone's heart and whether they have been born again. We depend upon Him and what He says in His Word to give clarity.

Compliant Behavior Can Look Like Conversion

Many kids do become Christians. Praise God for that! But God created kids with a heart to want to please their parents and other adults. Sometimes, compliant behavior or their desire to please leads to them to speak and to act in ways that looks like they are saved, when they aren't yet.

Fruit Brings More Clarity

It often takes time to clarify if a child really has become a Christian. Desiring to not confuse the child or the parent, we choose to wait for child to grow up more (often to pre-teen/teen ages) when fruit can be more clearly seen, not just by parents but by the church, in general.

Encourage in the Faith

We encourage the parents to fan the flame of faith they see in their children. Feed the sparks, keep pointing them to God, to know Him and live for Him. Pray, and be patient.

Five Thoughts on Waiting to Baptize Kids

Repent and Be Baptized

Baptism is tied not only to belief, but to repentance. Repentance is a life-direction of saying “no” to the tug of the world, and saying “yes” to living for God.

Older Is Often Clearer

This life of repentance may sometimes be seen in younger children, but often most clearly shows in pre-teens, teens, and sometimes not until later, when the opportunities and pressures of life reveal the heart.

Watch and Wait for Fruit

We wait for the fruit of spiritual life to be seen not just by parents, but by the church in general. We also wait for the child to initiate the request to be baptized and to attend membership classes like everyone else.

Baptism Tied to Membership

We believe that being baptized at church normally means becoming a member of the church. It also means being under the elders’ authority, not just parents’ authority. This is another reason why we counsel parents and kids to wait.

Encourage in the Faith

We encourage the parents to fan the flame of faith they see in their children. Feed the sparks, keep pointing them to God, to know Him and live for Him. Pray, watch, and be patient.

Five Ways to Recruit Teachers

Inspire

This is of Eternal Value

The 4-14 age group is the richest in conversion and ability to retain truth. Many people don't realize this. Inspiring potential volunteers with the huge eternal potential of their service helps them want to serve.

Limit

Care for the Volunteer

Sometimes it's not the actual serving but the fear you will be trapped into always serving that keeps people from helping in Children's Ministry. By limiting how frequently volunteers serve, you show you care for their spiritual well-being and want to guard against burn-out.

Launch

Start in the Comfort Zone

If you have a willing, but inexperienced volunteer, start them with something comfortable. Are they "scared" of babies, but love 3 year olds? Don't put them in the nursery. Start them as an assistant in the 3's class. Then, let them grow in confidence and gradually take on more responsibility, instead of vowing to never serve again.

Pray

God Leads, God Provides

It's important to pray for what God wants your church to provide for families, as well as for the volunteers to fill it. You need His wisdom, as well as His provision. Pray is not something we do when we have tried everything else. Prayer is something we do, first, middle, and last. Not only is it one of the most powerful things we can do, but we get the opportunity to see God at work, accomplishing His will, through us, and around us.

Ask

Some Gateways of Opportunity

Look for natural gateways of opportunity to ask for volunteers. Here's some that we use regularly:

- Pastors from the Pulpit
- In Membership Interviews
- Members' Meetings
- Church Newsletters
- Friend to Friend
- Deacon/Deaconess of Recruitment
- Children's Ministry Team, especially the Pastor over Children's Ministry

Eight Steps to Choose and Train Teachers

Watch and Wait

Must be members 6+ months before serving directly with the children. This gives the new members time to settle in and grow. It gives the church time to get to know them and whether they might be a good fit in Children's Ministry.

Childcare Basics Class

Everyone must go through the Childcare training course. This is geared mainly to child protection matters. But, it is also a vision-casting time, underscoring the great blessing serving the families in Children's Ministry is and the eternal value of this service.

Check Them Out

Everyone fills out a Children's Ministry application with background checks and references.

Start Simple

Start out new volunteers in childcare (no teaching) or as assistant teachers. This allows them to train as they go. And, it allows your Children's Ministry team to see them in action with the kids and the curriculum.

Teach in Teams

Team up new teachers with more experienced teachers. Give them responsibility gradually.

Put On a Show

Bring in a "star" teacher to model teach a class. We've found this to most effective if the star teacher meets with the regular teachers before class and they go through the lesson plan together. This allows the regular teachers to "see" what the star teacher is looking for in terms of possible areas of difficulty or of especially good discussion. Then, the star teacher models their lesson, with any modifications they might have made. Then, after class, they debrief, discussing what went well or what didn't.

Time to Train

Offer special training events targeted at particular issues, programs, or age groups.

Six Expectations for Teachers: Be Faithful to Your Commitment

Not a Pro

While some of our teachers are professional teachers, most are not. While we certainly encourage our teachers in ways they can teach the children well, we do not expect them to command a class like a professional teacher would. We appreciate their faithful service and encourage them that God will use it.

Be Prayerful

We encourage our teachers to be praying for both themselves and the children. That God would help them teach and that He would soften hearts that the children hear the gospel and be saved. God loves to be asked, especially in matters like this!

Be Equipped

We ask them to be diligent in prepping for their class, treating the opportunity with the respect that it deserves; and, with the eternal potential it has.

Be Excited

We want our teachers to come excited about the living God they know and get to tell the kids about. Excited that He has done wonderful things and might even use them as part of His plan to save the children in the class that very day.

Be Willing to Learn

We ask that teachers come with an open mind to learn from others how they might become even better teachers.

Be on Time

We ask the teachers to not cancel last minute if at all possible. And, to show up on time, prepared. Nothing gets a class off to a poor start as a flustered teacher who shows up late and unprepared. We actually hold a brief prayer time with our teachers 15 minutes before the kids arrive. This has helped even our teachers who tend to run late be in place before the kids.

Seven Ways to Help Teachers Manage the Classroom

The Number One Tricky

Difficult behavior in the classroom is so frustrating! Nine times out of ten it is difficult behavior that impedes learning and makes volunteers want to quit. It helps to be realistic with teachers about this problem. It not just because they are a “bad” teacher. Everyone faces it, even the most experienced teachers. They are in good company. But the good news is, there things to remember about kids and to do with kids that can help.

Kids Aren’t Little Adults

We often remind teachers that childishness is part of being a child. New teachers, especially, need to be encouraged that we work with who kids are and not be frustrated they aren’t just like us. They often are helped by learning how to channel the childishness into their mode of teaching.

Set Expectations

Kids rise to expectations. If they know what is expected of them BEFORE they are asked to do something, they are far more likely to do what you expect. Teachers who take time to give children (realistic) expectations, tend to reap the benefit of better behavior.

Target Transitions

Transitions between activities tend to be the times when behavior gets out of hand. Have your teachers tell the kids what they want them to do (such as line up at the door) and how they want them to do it (without running) BEFORE they ask them to do it. This can help transitions immensely.

Watch Someone, Talk to Someone

A star teacher can come in and lead a class so that the regular teacher can learn how to better manage the class. You can ask them to get together with a struggling teacher to talk about the classroom issues or even ask them if they would hold a workshop on classroom management.

Read and Learn

We have resources on classroom behavior that we put in our teachers’ lesson binders so they can refer to them. Lots of good teaching tips. (These are on the Praise Factory website.) There’s one paper we’ve written for preschool classrooms and one for elementary school age classrooms.

Pray

Ask God’s Holy Spirit to help the kids learn. Ask Him to fill the teaching time with His good purposes, even if it’s showing patience with childish behavior instead of getting to the lesson.

Three Invisible Partners in the Classroom Every Week

A Regular Schedule

A regular schedule is so helpful, especially in Children's Ministry classes where volunteers may change every month or even every week. Kids typically do better when they know what is coming and what is expected of them. A schedule provides this. We like to post our schedule on the wall so teachers can reference it easily, even as they are in the middle of teaching or playing with the kids.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is your teachers' partner, present in every class. He is the One who gives the teachers wisdom. He is the One who can work in the hearts of kids. It is so important to pray for God to use this powerful Helper in our teachers' hearts and minds, and to save our kids.

God's Word

God's Word is the third invisible partner, powerful to work in our teachers and our kids.

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

"[My Word] not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11

What amazing promises we have that God's Word will be at work as our teachers teach and our kids learn. Maybe we will see the impact of God's Word in their lives today. Maybe not until heaven. But God's Word is always fulfilling God's purposes. And He has put this powerful tool in the hands of our teachers!

Three Ingredients of Great Teaching

Understandable

God's Word, Told in Language They Can Grasp

So much in the Bible and in our worship services are BIG words for BIG people. Classes for kids give us an opportunity to teach true to God's Word in language kids can grasp.

What can help us present truths in an understandable way? Here's some ideas:

- A good curriculum, faithful to Scripture, that comes with a lesson script.
- A simple, age-appropriate translation of the Bible (or a Bible storybook) to use alongside your regular Bible to give you language to use with the kids.
- Watch YOUR language: even words like "grace" and "faith" need explaining. Books like "The Ology" by Marty Machiowski can be helpful in unpacking these words in a kid-friendly way (The Praise Factory curriculum provides these kinds of explanations for all these kinds of BIG words.)
- A few questions (and some simple answers) about any BIG words in the lesson (See Joel Beeke's Family Worship Guide as a possibility.)
- and, by all means, prayer.

Taking the time to make Bible truths understandable opens the gateway to kids' hearts to God and the gospel. You cannot believe in Someone or something you don't know or understand. And, it helps the kids be better able to engage in the worship service as the BIG words become words they have begun to know.

Enjoyable

God's Word, Reinforced with Activities They Love

Teaching that harnesses what kids enjoy to reinforce Biblical truth. I call these "Conduits of Truth" -- fun that is the workhorse for learning. They can be anything from a craft, a game, drama, or even a snack!

Some ways to do this:

- Think of review questions to ask the kids as their hands are busy working on a craft.
- Find your Bible verse set to music and learn it.
- Add review questions to games.

See Great Games for Preschoolers and Great Games for Elementary School Kids in the Curriculum Resources section of praisefactory.org. These can be used in any lesson in any curriculum. (These are also built into the Praise Factory curriculum.) You'll find these in the Curriculum Resources section. Add QR Code?

Memorable

God's Word, Left as a Legacy in Their Hearts and Minds

In many ways, teaching kids is an act of faith and endurance. Salvation is of the Holy Spirit. Even our best teaching attempts will not save anyone. So, by God's grace, we seek to leave a testimony and a trail in hearts and minds that will endure. These faithfully planted seeds can be used by God to sprout in His perfect timing.

Some ways to do this:

- By making your lessons understandable and enjoyable.
- Use repetition. Don't be afraid to repeat Bible truths. Most curriculum move on to something new every lesson, only for kids to quickly forget. (Praise Factory takes the school approach, and actually repeats Bible truths for 3-5 lessons. We find the kids retain what they learn better this way, just like schoolteachers do.) You can modify your curriculum to repeat lessons but add in new games/activities. But, you also can simply choose a Bible truth or a Bible verse using any curriculum to reinforce over multiple lessons, a quarter, a semester, or a whole year as a separate/secondary part of what you teach the kids. This allows you to keep with the curriculum pace yet also be building memory about an important Bible truth.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would seal the Bible truths in their hearts and minds.

Seven Ways For Pastors to Care Well for the Children's Ministry Administrator

Care for Their Soul

You are Christ's under-shepherd; care for your CMA as Christ does. Tend to your CMA; shepherd them well. Care more about their soul than about their job. Remember that you will give an account for them as sheep, as well as an employee (Heb 13:17; Eph 6:9).

Shelter Them

Shelter them from the demands of the job, demands people make, and from the demands they put on themselves. Help them serve within healthy limits.

Prioritize Regular Contact

Be in regular contact with your CMA. Get regular updates on parents, children, teachers, and programs. Weekly meetings, nailed down in schedules, are of great benefit.

Give Them a Vision

Let them be a CMA, not a de facto elder, asked to make decisions that they should not make. This is so common, as pastors get busy with other matters. Pastors need to have a vision for Children's Ministry and help the CMA understand it and carry it out.

Delegate, Not Dependent

Don't let them build themselves into Children's Ministry in a way that makes everything dependent upon them. Help them learn to delegate and raise up others to share the load.

Do the Difficult Stuff

Be there as the "fall guy" for difficult situations with children, parents, programs, and teachers. Pastors are the spiritual leaders for the whole congregation. Not only do they have authority to be appreciated and respected by all for difficult situations, but they often have more of the back story of what is going on that is contributing to the difficult situation.

Liason with Other Leaders

Provide updates in elders' meetings about CM and provide CMA with updates from elders that will help CM carry out their vision better.

Six Pieces of Advice from a Children's Ministry Administrator

Carry Out the Elders' Vision

Cultivate an attitude of humility that desires to know and carry out the godly vision of the elders of your church. Work under them CHEERFULLY.

Love God's People

Cultivate an attitude of humility that loves God's people, even when difficult situations arise, knowing that you, too, are a sinner saved only by grace.

Live Within Your Limits

Cultivate an attitude of humility by recognizing and living within your finiteness. Children's Ministry brings with it an overwhelming neediness.

Seek God's Pleasure

You will many times feel like it is your job to make everyone "happy;" but God is calling you to be a good steward and to work as unto Him, first of all.

See To Your Soul

Care for your own soul, entrusting to God what is more than you can or should do. Don't mix up capability and capacity.

Speak Honestly

Be honest with your elders about your limits. If you do not, you will very likely burnout.

Three Steps to a Custom Fit Curriculum/Program

Thoughts for Pastors and Others New to Leading Children's Ministry or Adding a New Program

STEP 1: Get Ready!

Be Realistic

All curriculum will need some customizing.

Curriculum is a starting point. It takes time, knowledge of your situation, and a bit of trial and error to make something that works well. Treat curriculum with the limitations it has, and you will be on your way to building something beautiful with it.

Be Led

Choose curriculum/programs in response to your pastor/s oversight

Pastors are responsible before God for the soundness of the teaching that takes place in their local church, even in kids' classes. They also oversee the spiritual care of all of the members of your church, even the volunteers in Children's Ministry. All of these responsibilities impact what you choose to teach, how much time you have to teach, and how many volunteers you have available to teach. This is why it is so important to start with your pastor/s leadership before you choose, create, or implement any curriculum.

Know "Yourself"

The more you know, the better the fit

There's so much more than what's on the lesson plan that goes into a good curriculum fit. Here's some factors you may need to consider, like we have: There's your kids, your parents; your building, your budget; your teachers and allotted teaching time; and how much prep and oversight will it require from your Children's Ministry team. Discuss your answers with your pastor and Children's Ministry team. Ask God to give you a clear picture of where your church is and what He wants you to teach the children.

The more you understand who you are teaching and the parameters that impact teaching them, the better you can customize the curriculum to reach them.

Find Your Limits

Live where you are, pray for more

Use what you learned about your church to establish healthy limits. Remember: you are looking to create something that is sustainable over a long time. This will create less stress on your volunteers and Children's Ministry leadership and will be able to bless your parents and their children over many years.

Live where you are! If you are a small church, with few resources, don't try to be a big church with unlimited resources. Trust God to give you what you need to serve who you have, with what you have. But, of course, pray for more! We serve a God who loves to be asked, and who loves to answer. Pray for God to make the most of what you have. Pray for Him to multiply it and give you more!

STEP 2: Get Set!

Appreciate What You Have

Don't be blind to today's blessings

Sometimes we get so caught up in what's not going well that we forget to appreciate what is working. When you are looking for a new curriculum, you can bet that will bring change. And change frequently brings bumps with it as you transition teachers, kids and even parents. The more you can hold onto what is working with your current teachers/curriculum/teaching structure etc., the easier it will be to introduce something new. Also, chances are, someone has been working hard with the children using whatever curriculum you are using now. Showing your appreciation for all they have done will be an encouragement to them. And, it will go a long way in helping them be excited about whatever change is coming next.

Look for Good Bones

Highlight priorities with curriculum review questions

Use your pastors'/Children's Ministry priorities to make curriculum review questions. These are the "good bones" that will help you spot the best, potential, new curriculum for your church. Here are some questions you might include:

1. Fit pastors' teaching priorities for the kids?
2. Biblically sound? Does it assume conversion?
3. Activities that reinforce the truth, and aren't just filler?
4. Easy to teach? How much prep needed? Who will do it?
5. Helps kids gather more meaningfully with the church?
6. Resources for parents to reinforce truths with kids at home?
7. Single time purchase, annual subscription, or materials that have to be purchased each time (such as workbooks)?

Bring in Others

Get perspective and approval

Show the potential curriculum to others, especially the Children's Ministry team, experienced teachers, and, of course, the elders. Don't make the mistake of depending only on your perspective on the materials, unless you are all there is! Different perspectives see different possibilities and different, potential problems. So many problems can be avoided ahead of time by seeking the counsel of others about how to implement a new curriculum. Pray for the elders as they prayerfully consider the curriculum/program. Be a humble, cheerful responder to their questions. Have confidence that the Lord is working through them, even if they decide the curriculum isn't a good fit.

Make It Yours

Modify the curriculum to fit your situation

Now, it's time to custom-build. Talk to someone who has used it already or observe it being taught. Get a good sense of what resources the curriculum includes and how they are used. Ask God to give you wisdom about adjustments that you might need to make to the resources.

Review what you learned about "Yourself" (your church). Think about how to shape the curriculum resources to best fit your situation and your children. Get out the curriculum sample again only now you are going to make it your working copy. Mark it with your thoughts. Cross out what won't be needed. Use a highlighter on what you want to keep.

STEP 3: Let's Go!

Make a Start

The curriculum's maiden voyage

Enlist a team of "load-bearers" who will lead in launching the curriculum. This will take an extra sacrifice of time for weeks or even months, as the new curriculum is pioneered and adjusted. This team will be the catalyst for others to take part as the new curriculum/program gets established.

You may want to test the curriculum with a slow, simple start, only changing or substituting one important thing with what you are currently doing. Or, you may decide to launch with a "full makeover" that changes most everything. Then, try out your customized version of the curriculum on the kids.

Keep Revising

Tweak your plan to make a better fit

As you test-run the curriculum, evaluate and make changes. But don't forget: new curriculum is new curriculum. Teachers will be getting used to it as will the kids. You will make better changes if you give it a few sessions to let patterns emerge.

Once you get a consistently good fit, make it your class structure, followed each week. The predictability of a regular schedule helps train teachers more quickly. And, it helps the kids know what to expect, and what is expected of them-- a great help managing behavior in the classroom. It's like the extra volunteer that shows up every week to help.

Train As You Go

Bring others to the teaching team

With a consistently good schedule in place, the "loadbearers" start mentoring new, prospective teachers in the curriculum. These teachers first observe the experienced teachers lead, then gradually hand over teaching to them.

At CHBC, we have adopted a practice of recruiting "over-sized" teams that more than cover the weekly teacher needs of a class. So, we might find 6 teachers to commit to a year of teaching in a classroom that only needs 2 teachers at a time. A schedule is created to spread the load over the year. This builds in vacation time, last-minute substitutes, and a way to pair newer, less experienced teachers with more experienced teachers (a.k.a. on the job teacher training!) We find volunteers much more willing to serve year after year on teams set up like this. This lets us use the program, itself, to recruit new teachers.

Build On or Remodel

Add more as your team grows in confidence or your needs change

Expect change! You will very likely be repeating these three steps of "Get Ready, Get Set, Let's Go!" over and over as different aspects of your church changes.

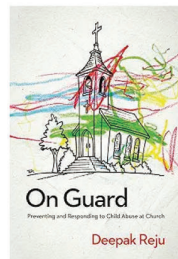
These steps will help you evaluate whether you simply need to "build on" to what you have already or remodel.

Learn More: Books, Podcasts, Articles, and Praisefactory.org links



Build on Jesus (by Marty Machioski and Deepak Reju, former CHBC pastor over families)

Especially for pastors and children's ministry administrators. It's a great description of how pastors lead in caring well for families without burning out staff or volunteers. Nothing else like it on the market. Purchase through Amazon.com and others.



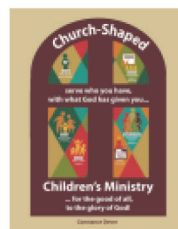
On Guard (by Deepak Reju)

How to think through protecting children and the volunteers who work with them through creating and implementing a Child Protection Policy. Purchase through Amazon.com and others.



From the Field: What Pastors Have to Say about Children's Ministry (by Connie Dever)

A compilation of answers Connie Dever gleaned from interviewing Nine Marks pastors around the world. Great insights and practical ideas. Purchase through Amazon; free downloads at praisefactory.org



Church-Shaped Children's Ministry (by Connie Dever)

This is the resource we usually use to guide us through our Saturday workshop at CHBC. Purchase through Amazon; free downloads at praisefactory.org.



Praise Factory Pitch Book (by Connie Dever)

A very visual guide to Church-Shaped Children's Ministry and the Praise Factory curriculum. Purchase through Amazon; free downloads at praisefactory.org.



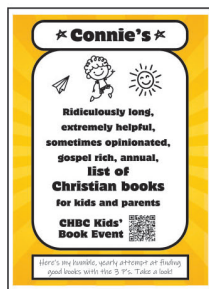
9Marks Pastors' Talks Podcasts: Jonathan Leeman, Mark Dever, Connie Dever
Church-Shaped Children's Ministry, Praise Factory curriculum, and finding and using good books with kids. Episodes 261,262



Give Them Time: Protect the Assuring Nature of a Child's Baptism
(Michael Lawrence)

Thoughtful reflections on the benefits of waiting to baptize young, professing children until they are older.

Learn More: Books, Podcasts, Articles, and Praisefactory.org links



Connie's Ridiculously Long, Extremely Helpful, Sometimes Opinionated, Gospel-rich, Annual List of Christian Books for Kids and Parents (by Connie Dever)

Booklist created annually for the CHBC Kids' Book Event. Focuses on good books that have the "3 P's" (God's **Promises** are for God's **People**. God's **Plan of Salvation** tells us how we can become one of God's people.)

Free downloads at praisefactory.org.



Praise Factory Home Page and Slideshows: praisefactory.org

(by Connie Dever)

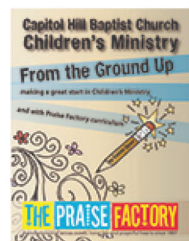


Learn more and get free resources on Church Shaped Children's Ministry and Praise Factory curriculum... and don't miss the music playlists and free downloads!



Praise Factory Extended Tour Book (by Connie Dever)

A walk through the basics and classroom time of the three curriculum in the Praise Factory family. Purchase through Amazon; free downloads (black and white) at praisefactory.org.



From the Ground Up: Getting Started in Children's Ministry or with the Praise Factory Curriculum (by Connie Dever)

curriculum samples and lots of step-by-step help and ideas

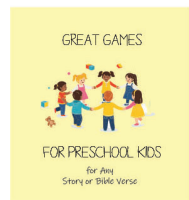
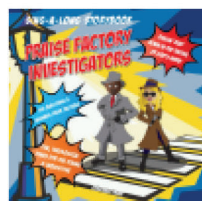
Ok... this book is thick, and some would say intense. That's my warning. However, it does contain not only curriculum samples of all three curriculum, but extensive help in understanding and implementing the curriculum. You might not need this much. But who knows, maybe you do! Purchase through Amazon; free downloads at praisefactory.org.



Praise Factory Investigators Sing Along Adventure Songbook and Songs (by Connie Dever)

This musical adventure uses a detective flair to introduce the 16 Praise Factory themes through bluegrass, rap and everything in between.

Makes use of a simple story line to teach the children even more truth about the 16 Praise Factory themes, as well as provide lyrics and listening questions for each of the songs. These 16 songs are also used as part of Hide 'n' Seek Kids, Deep Down Detectives, and PFI curriculums. Listen online or download for free. You can purchase the full color version through Amazon.com, or download a black and white version from this website (color file too big to offer as a download).



Great Games for Preschool Kids (by Connie Dever)

A compilation of the games used in the Hide 'n' Seek Kids and Deep Down Detective curriculums, but can be used with any Bible story or Bible verse in any curriculum or setting. Geared to ages 2-7. Free downloads at praisefactory.org.



Great Games for Elementary School Kids (by Connie Dever)

A compilation of the games used in the Praise Factory Investigators curriculum, but can be used with any Bible story or Bible verse in any curriculum or setting. Geared to ages 5-12. Free downloads at praisefactory.org.



Learn More: Praise Factory Front Page Slideshows

A great way to learn more about the ideas presented in this Pitchbook!

Learn More about Church-Shaped Children's Ministry:



**Your Ministry
IS
Children's
Ministry**



**Learn the
Praise
Factory
Basics**



**Overview of
Church-Shaped
Children's
Ministry**



**Church-Shaped
Children's
Ministry
at CHBC**



**Church-Shaped
Children's
Ministry
FAQ's**

Learn More about Praise Factory Curriculum:



**Overview of
Praise Factory
Family of
Curriculum**



**CUSTOM
BUILD:
Hide 'n' Seek
Kids**



**CUSTOM
BUILD:
Deep Down
Detectives**



**CUSTOM
BUILD:
Praise Factory
Investigators**



**Praise Factory
Family of
Curriculum
FAQ's**

More Resources:



**Detective
Dan's
Big Question
Box**



**Thoughts on
Using, Choosing,
& Creating
Curriculum**



**A Good
Look at
Kids' Books**



**PFI
Adventure
Sing Along
Book & Songs**



**Parents'
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Thanks for visiting!



These and many more
free resources
can be found
at praisefactory.org

Check out our
free Saturday workshops
and observation Sundays
in Washington, DC,
every
March, May, and September!
Learn more and register online.