

Give Ministry Opportunities to Children

So far we've noted that children's ministries are effective as they

- Bless children with Jesus' love
- Relate to children at their level
- Involve children in the lives of caring adults in the church
- Nurture children in the way of Jesus.

In this article we'll discuss giving children opportunities to be involved in ministry.

Children's ministry is best understood as not only ministry to children, but also ministry by children. Effective children's ministries not only nurture children with Jesus' love, they equip children to extend that love to others.



God ministers through children

The Lord spoke to a young Samuel, calling him to a prophetic ministry (1 Samuel 3). He chose a young shepherd-boy, David, to be Israel's king (1 Samuel 16). He chose a young virgin, Mary, to bear and nurture the Christ-child (Luke 1).



These biblical accounts show that God extends his ministry to and through people of all ages—children very much included. Effective children's ministries nurture and equip children and then give them opportunities for ministry.

Identity in serving

Children active in ministry within the church often develop a sense of belonging within their church family that will last a lifetime. A Barna Research Group project determined that Christians who made their initial profession of faith as children tended to remain followers of Jesus throughout their lives. We help children develop this sense of belonging by involving them in the ministries of the congregation.

Equip children to minister in your church

In the third article in this series (see *Involve Children in Your Life*), we discussed ways a congregation can involve children in the weekly worship service:

1. Performing liturgical dance
2. Singing or playing musical instruments on the worship team
3. Performing drama (including puppetry)
4. Being involved in Children's Moments (children's sermons)
5. Receiving the offering
6. Ushering, greeting and parking
7. Caring for younger children
8. Giving announcements
9. Serving communion
10. Assisting with the audiovisual system



I participated in a worship service of a small congregation where children were involved doing many of the things listed above. It was inspiring to see the joy in their faces and in the response of the congregation.

I spoke afterward with a 10-year-old girl who had presented one of the announcements. She did a wonderful job—speaking clearly and with conviction (I was moved to tears by a church announcement!). She was so happy to be an active part of her church.

Children can serve in many ways. Older children can assist in Sunday school classes with younger children. Children can write letters to home-bound members. They can visit nursing homes. The possibilities are nearly endless, but the principle is this: equip and then accompany children as they participate in the ministries of the church.

Conclusion

As we conclude this series, I challenge all of us to consider how we can make ourselves more available

to the Holy Spirit to BRING children to our Lord and to involvement in his service.

- How can you bless children with Jesus' love?
- How can you relate to children in your church at their level?
- How can you involve children more fully in your life and in the life of your congregation?
- How can you help children be nurtured in the way of Jesus and in the truth of his gospel?
- And, finally, how can you work to give children ministry opportunities within your church?

I pray that God will show you how, and that as he does so, you will respond with passion and persistence.

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