

BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

— an optimistic, gospel centred ministry to children



Notes for the person facilitating this training are written in blue. It's important to read through all exercises and all blue text instructions when preparing to facilitate this training.

All videos can be previewed prior to the training session but be aware that this course has a two-month limited access. So the training needs to be completed within two months from the date of purchase.

The timing of each exercise is a guide only. For example, a larger group may need more time in sharing ideas from multiple small groups after a brainstorming exercise.

Allocate two hours for this training, with a twenty minute break after Exercise #4 (around the 55 minute mark). If possible, provide tea and coffee and some light refreshments.

Set Up:

- Set up chairs around tables (ideally 6-7 per table)
- Cover tables with paper
- Place coloured markers on each table
- Place wrapped lollies on tables as treats (optional)

Need:

- Data projector
- Sound system

Introduction:

- Welcome people.
- Indicate timing of breaks and essential information for all in attendance (toilet locations, emergency exits...).
- Begin by committing the time to God in prayer.
- Encourage everyone to introduce themselves to those in their group if appropriate.

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Welcome people and open in prayer.

LET'S BEGIN

Read the text in the blue box below prior to beginning Exercise #1.

"Children are not a distraction from more important work. They are the most important work."

~ Dr. John Trainer

"Children's ministry is ministering to a person at the most critical time in their life."

~ Dale Hudson

Affirm to participants that they have come along today to think through this most important work - ministering the gospel to a person at the most critical time in their life.

EXERCISE #1 (5 minutes, self reflection exercise)

1. When you hear the phrase 'children's ministry', what comes to mind?
2. Write in one sentence what you hope to see God do through your children's ministry.
3. Order the following age groups 1 to 3: 1 being most likely to say 'Yes' to Jesus, 3 being least likely.

0-11 years

12-18 years

19 years plus

Do not ask people to share their reflections at this stage.

VIDEO #1: PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

What comes to mind when you hear the words, 'children's ministry'?

What we think will play itself out in what we do.

And what we do will reflect what we think.

So what do we think?

The Nuisance Philosophy

- Views children as a problem
- Aim: To reduce distractions for the adults
- Effective: If children are invisible

The Necessity Philosophy

- Views children as a necessity
- Aim: To provide quality babysitting while adults learn
- Effective: If no one complains

The Strategic Philosophy

- Views children as a means to an end
- Aim: To attract families to church through the children's ministry
- Effective: If children are engaging with the teaching and want to continue coming

The Discipleship Philosophy

- Views children as people in need of a Saviour and Lord
- Aim: To see children become fully devoted followers of Christ, and live as active members of the church now
- Effective: If children are helped to understand the gospel, and being called to respond in faith and obedience to Jesus

Children are the most likely to say 'Yes' to Jesus

They are not the next generation - they are members of our church now

We are responsible, under God, to disciple them.

EXERCISE #2 (10 minutes, group exercise)

1. How do you know if a child has understood the gospel?
2. Read the following stories out loud. What have these children understood?
3. What would you say if asked, 'Are they expressing faith in Jesus?'

Story #1

One boy described what he'd learnt at Club this year: "My sin pushes God away. But Jesus came to take my sin away, so I don't push God away anymore."

Story #2

A mother was walking to school with her son. He asked, "Mum, how much does it cost to get into heaven?" The mum shared how Jesus had paid with his life so our sins could be forgiven - so now heaven's door is open - it's free for everyone who asks for forgiveness. Her son responded, "I believe in Jesus but I've never asked Him to forgive me for my sin." Before they reached school, her son had asked.

Story #3

An adult approached a speaker at a conference and asked, "Remember me? You taught me Scripture+ when I was in primary school." The adult continued, "I went through a rough time but I remembered a verse you taught me, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' So I did. I asked Jesus to save me. And now I teach kids about Jesus."

+ Scripture = weekly half hour faith lessons in state schools in NSW, Australia, given by volunteers.

4. Read the passage below. What do you think Jesus means when he says, 'the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'?

Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

~ Matthew 19:13-15

5. Stop and pray as a group for the little children entrusted to your church community.