

Philosophy of Children's Ministry

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The Bible commands that we teach the “words of God” to our children and talk about these words at all times in the day (Deut 6:4-9). We must teach the wondrous works of God and the Word of God to our children so that they would put their trust and confidence in God and not forget God (Ps 78:1-8). The local Church can assist families in educating and nurturing this biblically-saturated and gospel-centered education in the following ways.

1. The Children's Ministry must be centered around the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The children's ministry in the local church must have at its core and as its foundation the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ. The teachers and leaders must know the gospel and commit to teaching the gospel faithfully and regularly in every venue and in every setting to the children. The children, even from the youngest of ages, can know and learn a very simple gospel presentation. And this must be the foremost goal and passion in the children's ministry—namely, the faithful teaching and preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The Children's Ministry must not be the primary spiritual teaching environment but rather the Church should come alongside and affirm what the family has already been doing throughout the week.

Ideally, the children's ministry should not provide the only “spiritual, Bible-learning hour” for the children each week. Rather, the goal is for the children's ministry at Church to enhance, emphasize, and continue what families have cultivated all week long. Families must foster a worshipful environment at home every day. There should be some form of Bible-reading and teaching each day, prayer, and perhaps singing with the family each day. It is the responsibility of pastor Dad and mom to be the *primary shepherds* in the lives of the children. This comes through catechizing, teaching, memorizing, discipling, and disciplining the children regularly, faithfully, and biblically.

3. The Children's Ministry must teach through the Word of God covering all of the themes of Scripture while omitting none and watering down none of the theological doctrines.

Any curriculum that leaves out the doctrine of sin, hell, judgment, or wrath is unbiblical and must not be used to teach the children. The Children's ministry must incorporate curriculums that preach the entire gospel and teach through the entire Word of God and every event and doctrine in the Word of God. There are ways of teaching, illustrating, and simplifying every doctrine in the Bible so that even the youngest of children can get a simple grasp of its meaning. Furthermore, the Bible

teaching on a particular event, topic, story, or biblical character must preach the *right point* of the passage rather than eisegeting the text and bringing out some moral lesson when it is not the author's primary intent in that passage.

4. The Children's Ministry should encourage children from a young age to sit with their parents during the worship service so that the entire family worships together and hears the same sermon and application.

It seems that the wisest way to incorporate children in the worship of the church is to strongly encourage parents to have their children sit with them during the entire worship service. This does not mean there can be no children's ministry events during the week but it does mean that the primary corporate worship gathering for the entire body of Christ should also include children. This is most beneficial for the following reasons: (1) *the entire family is able to worship together and hear the Word of God preached from the same preacher.* This allows the family to talk about the same sermon, the same illustrations, the same applications, the same implementation techniques throughout the week at home; (2) *it teaches the children that those who repent of sin, believe in Christ, and live lives of piety are a part of the body of Christ and expected to take part in the regular worship gathering of the Church;* (3) *it teaches that children cannot be dismissed during the sermon for their own 'children's church' and 'fun-time.'* And (4) *it allows the preacher to address the children even during his sermon with appropriate applications, sermon anecdotes, and illustrations to help keep them engaged.*

5. The Children's Ministry must minister to and shepherd the parents so that they properly understand their responsibility to teach, evangelize, discipline, instruct, and shepherd their children in a Christ-exalting way.

A primary responsibility of a children's ministry is not only the nurturing of the children but specially their parents as well. The parents must be taught how to teach the Word of God at home in daily-life situations, how to counsel their child's heart and get at the core, root desires, how to minister the gospel of Jesus Christ in every disciplinary situation at home, how important it is to use the rod on small children who disobey, and how to do family worship. All of these may look different from family to family in the practical outworkings but every godly family should be cultivating an environment of catechizing the children in the Word of God and in the works of God so that the children will repent of sin, believe in Christ, and strive to walk in a way that pleases God.