

Children's Ministries

Leadership Certification Course

Semester One





mission canada
BECAUSE WE MUST
PARCE QUE NOUS DEVONS

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Welcome to the **Children's Ministries Leadership Certification Course**. What lies before you is a journey through many important aspects of children's ministry, related to working with children and a leader's own personal life. It is our hope that you will grow successfully as a children's leader both philosophically and in practical wisdom and application as you work through the materials.

The course is designed for those involved in ministry to the next generation who have had little or no formal training in the area of children's ministries. Seasoned practitioners representing a variety of churches and ministries across Canada have written the course especially for you, sharing a wealth of experience, information, biblical truths and helpful tips that will expand your thinking and sharpen your skills.

Each session you will:

 **Read** through the theme, studying the content and contemplating its relevance for your life and ministry.

 **Reflect** on what you have learned, applying the theme through journaling, evaluating and planning.

 **Respond** through a variety of questions and action steps that will make your study very practical and applicable.

It is the desire of Mission Canada and your District Children and Family Ministry Specialists to see you grow in your own personal faith in Christ so that you can passionately pass faith along, in a knowledgeable and contagious way, to a generation desperately in need of a spiritual experience with a God who is real and truly relational. It is our priority to raise up a generation of disciples who are Bible-based and Spirit-filled. It is through this written course and mentorship cohorts that you will be equipped to reach, teach and disciple children and families... because we must.



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Module 1

Leaders and the Children They Serve



Module 1
Session 1

**Your Personal
Relationship With God**

SESSION 1

Your Personal Relationship With God

by Jo-Anne Hollander

How many of you have heard someone make the statement that the ministry is burning them out? If you are the person making that statement I would ask, "How is your personal prayer time?" "How is your devotional life?" "What is God calling you to do?" Children must be led by spiritually passionate leaders! If we want to ignite spiritual passion in our children, we must stay spiritually fresh. To perform like a champion, we must practise like one. In our spiritual lives we do so much pouring out that God often gets the leftovers. God wants to bless our ministry abundantly, but it is up to us as leaders to ensure first that we are filled vessels. Empty vessels have nothing to offer; they can't even sustain themselves.

There are several things we can do to ensure that we are filled, not empty.

Start by being devoted to God's Word. Read scripture daily (a chapter per day from both the Old and New Testaments) or follow a structured and disciplined annual Bible reading plan. Find an accountability partner. Children need to be led by people who are feasting on God's Word in a fresh way. If our foundation is weak, everything else will be weak as well.

Read

You can capture what God is saying to you in a journal. For this, I like the SOAP method:

S-scripture (read it)

O-observation (make an observation)

A-application (apply it to your life)

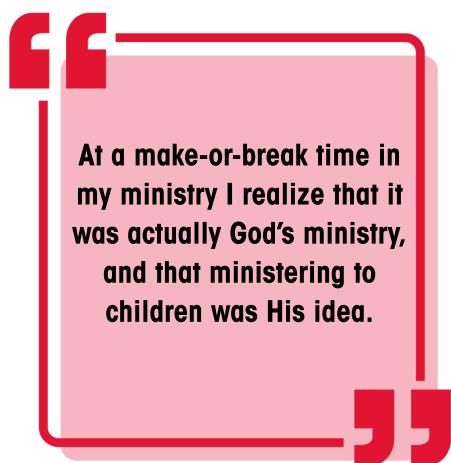
P-prayer (ask God about it)

The question that the SOAP method asks you to answer is: "How will I be different because of what I have read today?"

It is important that we take time to pray and use scripture when we pray. We should pray for the kids in our ministries and for those who work with us. We need to spend as much time praying as we do preparing. It is also important to have someone praying for us as we go about teaching our children.

Children need to be led by people who are passionate! Children need to see you worshipping, praying, and reading your Bible. They should know that you listen to other teachers, and that giving your tithes to the church is a necessary, Biblical and important practice too. Never underestimate the influence you have over the children, youth and adults in your ministry. Kids need to hear stories about what God is doing in your life and what He is saying to you.

It is valuable to have a mentor, accountability partner or coach. This person should be someone who will listen and not judge you, someone who asks permission to offer advice, and someone who shares your beliefs, values and faith. Knowing that you have someone who has confidence in you can be the best stress reliever. It is also good to have at least two people who will be there for you in times of stress, even if only by phone or through video call. In life we may walk through difficult situations, and it is important for you to maintain your spiritual, physical, mental and emotional health. In these situations, make sure you have a trustworthy mentor who is separated from the situation. Pray often. Keep a constant dialogue going with God. Finally, accept mistakes and move on; don't be too hard on yourself. Keep moving forward. Take out the garbage from the past year and forget it. Move forward, putting God first in all you do.



In all we do, we need to trust God. Have faith that He will continue to lead you in the right direction. Trust Him to supply all of your needs, even volunteer workers and finances. At a make-or-break time in my ministry I realized that it was actually God's ministry, and that ministering to children was His idea. He is the Lord of the harvest. All He expects from us is that we be obedient to what He has called us to do.

We must pray for workers and trust that He is already preparing specific individuals, and that He will provide. He is faithful.

My prayer for you:

Father, it is both an honour and a privilege to serve You, the King of kings and Lord of lords. I lift up each one who is beginning this leadership course. May they see this study as an opportunity to grow in You, in Your Word, and to see their service to You strengthened for greater effectiveness. I especially pray for those who are battling discouragement and wondering if they are even making a difference. We take every thought captive in the name of Jesus. We ask that You would strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to You. For those who are feeling spiritually or physically weak, may they see Your miracle-working power so that they, too, may declare, 'Look what the Lord has done!' For those who are feeling pressed on every side, may they be reminded that they are persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed; and that each one is needed in the body of Christ. Pour out Your oil of gladness, fill us to overflowing with the fullness of Your joy, and place in Your servant a peace that passes all understanding. Let us be people of integrity in all aspects of our lives, so that we would know Your purpose and unique plan. Help us to be strong in our relationship with You so we can shine Your light and see Your kingdom expanded.

Amen.



Reflect

Spiritual Health Checklist: How is your spiritual health?

Relationships

- Right relationship with God. Reflect on 1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 1:1 and 1 John 1:7. If we are spiritually healthy, it will be evident in our ministry. We are here to serve Him!
- Right relationship with others. Reflect on Philippians 2:5-7. We should be praying together, sharing our lives, and ministering to one another. This makes for strong teams and helps us to trust one another.
- Right relationship with ourselves. By relating well to God and others we develop healthy attitudes toward ourselves. Our lives are transformed from selfishness to selflessness. Our attitude and prayerful focus should be on God.

Responsibilities

- To God, by commitment and obedience to His Word.
- To the Word, in study, reading, and scripture memory.
- To prayer, by talking to God and developing a deeper love for and understanding of who He is. We must seek to understand His character and nature and realize that He is our source for all things.
- To people: the lost, the needy, the forgotten and the sick. Every type of person needs the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. You can't really love Jesus if you don't love His people and yourself. After all, you are His creation—created in His image.
- To the church, the bride of Christ. We are His servants, designed to worship Him and do His work.

Results

- You will see people's lives changed through anointed ministry where your focus is on Christ. You will see people surrender their lives to Jesus. You will see people receive healing. You will see hurting people touched by the Spirit of God. Results do not depend upon our ability but come from God. All He asks is that we walk in His ways and obey His leading.
- The Spirit of God will make you more like Jesus if you let Him. You will see the needs of others more clearly and become involved in meeting those needs in the name of Jesus.
- As a team that has formed strong relationships of love and respect, you will see God move in one other's hearts and lives and in your ministry, church and community.



Respond

1. Start a personal journal. Here are some suggestions:

- Your journal is a place where you can be yourself. Keep it confidential. Record your thoughts and feelings, not just events.

- Use a book/spiral-bound notebook rather than loose sheets of paper. Date each entry.
- You may wish to keep several sections in your journal for things like Bible study notes, prayer lists, dreams, visions and plans.
- Record your feelings about God's call on your life. These things may help you find God's direction for your life.
- Use the SOAP method for devotions and record it in your journal.
- Use your journal as a place of communion with God. Write down some of your prayers as well as any insights God gives you from His Word. These notes can prove to be of great encouragement in times of difficulty.
- From time to time, review your journal and take note of the way your first impressions and feelings may have changed. You will see how you are growing if you have been honest in your entries.

2. Prepare a one-week devotional plan for yourself and follow it.

- Include a daily scripture, a key verse to memorize and an action plan with insight into how it applies to your life.
- At the end of the week, journal what God has been speaking to your heart and teaching you through His Word and the time spent in His presence. Describe your personal feelings of spiritual health and wellness at the end of your week.
- Celebrate how you have grown and make a commitment to continue with a strong weekly devotional plan.

Remember, nothing can be poured out of an empty vessel. It is our responsibility as leaders and followers of Christ to keep our vessels full and overflowing.

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Module 1
Session 2

Leaders of Influence

SESSION 2

Leaders of Influence

by Natalie Rogge

Do you ever just sit and wonder what people will one day say about you at your funeral service? Have you ever walked into a room and into a conversation where others have been talking about you and the qualities you possess? Have you sat in the chair of honour at a party held for you and simply listened to comments and words of praise that people expressed about you?

We often walk through life, day after day, doing the things that come naturally. We follow through on the tasks assigned to us in our workplace, and on the responsibilities of home life, and don't really stop to consider all the character qualities that our lives possess—or don't possess.

Is your life one that represents strong moral and ethical values? How do the values you live by line up with the Word of God? Reputation as a leader is so important. It takes years to create a healthy reputation. Sadly, it can take just minutes to destroy it. Leaders who influence others in godly ways must be leaders of integrity.

We shouldn't learn just by doing and failing, but by first reading and studying God's Word, then working hard to apply His principles to our daily lives. Of course, we will fail at times. We are human. Yet His Word speaks to the fact that we must strive to be Christlike in all we do.

God has given us in His Word the examples of many leaders. Some failed miserably and turned their backs on God; some struggled and failed but got back up on their feet with repentant hearts and a desire for change. Others followed God passionately their whole lives. Each has something to teach us about being leaders of influence. Let's take a look at some biblical examples we've been given in order that we may learn and discern what God desires of us.

Read

Moses

Hebrews 11:24-29 tells us that "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned."

It was to Moses that God entrusted the Ten Commandments. He was chosen as leader over mass amounts of people. Yet it was also Moses whose father-in-law said to him in Exodus 18:17b-23, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and instructions, and show them the way to live and how they are to behave. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

As leaders, we can mistakenly think that we are the 'only one' God has called to complete His mission. We must never lose sight of the fact that God's people are at work all around the globe fulfilling the roles He calls us to as Christ followers. The moment

we think more highly of ourselves, we are sure to falter or fail. We must constantly realize that when God calls a leader, just as He called Moses, He not only anoints that individual for the work He's set out for them, but He also places others around that leader to assist in the task. It is important that, as leaders, we recognize and identify the need for balance. When working for God and His purposes, it is not about getting a pat on the back at the end of the day. We must never strive to please people; we must be pleasers of God. When God wants to include someone else in our leadership journey, or even replace us with another leader along the way, we must be comfortable and welcoming of that individual as we can never be sure exactly how God intends for His larger plan to unfold. Willingness and flexibility are key.

**When God calls a leader,
He not only anoints that
individual for the work He's
set out for them, but He also
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Being able to trust and being trusted by others are key ingredients to healthy character. When we cannot be trusted, it is a sign that our integrity as a leader is in question. Billy Graham has been quoted as saying, "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost. When health is lost, something is lost. When character is lost, everything is lost."

Joseph

Joseph is a classic biblical example of someone who needed to trust God, even when things looked bleak and weren't going as he would have thought or imagined. There he sat in a filthy Egyptian dungeon. Many thoughts must have crossed his mind during that time as to whether he would even make it out of that deep, dark pit. Yet, in the midst of the darkness and filth, God was with Him! Scripture tells us very clearly that not only was He with

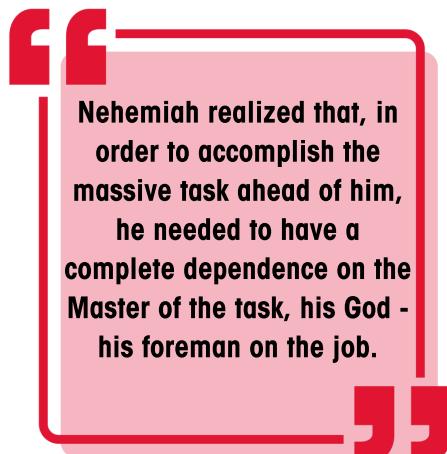
with Joseph, but He treated him with kindness and showed him favour. In fact, Joseph's leadership responsibilities were raised to a whole new level in that deep and dark pit. It didn't mean he didn't need to endure the hardship of his situation and surroundings, but God was faithful to not give him more than he could handle, and He showed Joseph glimpses and glimmers of His presence with him, even in this dark and dreary time in his life. In his book *Keep Believing*, author Ray Pritchard makes this statement: "We gain more from sickness than we do from health. We pray more when we are scared than when we are confident. And everything that happens to you—the tragedies, the unexplained circumstances, even the stupid choices you make—all of it is grist for the mill of God's loving purpose."¹ Dare we think for a minute that the life we live is all about us? As a follower of Christ and a leader in His service, we must realize that He is always at work all around us unfolding His plan and purposes. He desires those whose lives are pure and blameless before Him be part of that great plan. Can He count on you to be a leader of influence?

Nehemiah

Nehemiah was another leader with outstanding character qualities. He was a motivator, a delegator, a decision maker and a great administrator. If you owned a construction company or were a developer, Nehemiah was the type of person you would be hiring tomorrow as your foreman or project manager on the job. He was a leader of the people and could get the job done. As a supervisor of the rebuilding of walls, Nehemiah needed to be a strong communicator and coordinator. The job would never have been completed had he tried to tackle it on his own. Nehemiah knew what needed to be done, how it should be accomplished, and even whom to choose to do the job. He was the ultimate recruiter! You may have heard this statement before: "Finances follow vision." Well, in Nehemiah's case, workers and volunteers followed vision. Think about that for a minute— it's more than just getting up to make an announcement from a platform that you need workers for children's ministries. First, there is a vision that must be set and communicated, clearly and with purpose.

Nehemiah knew he would get opposition from some, but he knew how to handle it. He was an encourager. Nehemiah was both aggressive and progressive. His attitude was positive, and he moved forward. Nehemiah realized that, in order to accomplish the massive task ahead of him, he needed to have a complete dependence on the Master of the task, his God—his foreman on the job. Because he knew he couldn't do it in his own strength, he not only relied heavily on the teamwork of others, but he first and foremost went to God in his prayer life, fasting and waiting on Him.

As a leader, Nehemiah needed to do an assessment of his surroundings. He took a close look at the condition of the city and the people before he announced his strategy plan. In leadership, sometimes we need to remove ourselves from the situation and look at the overwhelming tasks from a different perspective. Being enveloped in a setting can often blur the clarity of our vision for a clear solution. Nehemiah was an overcomer. He remained strong in the face of adversity, and there was much that came his way. He was courageous and also confrontational, displaying holy anger and a strong rebuke. His leadership was



Nehemiah realized that, in order to accomplish the massive task ahead of him, he needed to have a complete dependence on the Master of the task, his God - his foreman on the job.

strong, yet not dictatorial. He set an example for others to follow and led the people well. That is evident by the end result. In just 52 days, the walls of the city were rebuilt. This was the best confidence booster for God's people.

In identifying his skills, strengths and character traits that were required to get the job of rebuilding the city walls done, Nehemiah needed to be honest with himself when the end of the job came around. He knew that the best leader for the next chapter—what was about to unfold in the city—was his brother, and not he himself. Nehemiah

identified his brother as the next leader and passed the baton of leadership onto his sibling. Even that is such a lesson in character. We must be true to who we are, as well as to the gifts and abilities God has given to us, and the task(s) He has entrusted us with. When that has been accomplished, we must re-evaluate and ask our Master if He desires us to pass on the torch to another, or if there is another task He has yet to reveal in the same arena in which we find ourselves. That can be tough, especially if He asks us to hand over the torch to a brother or a sister, or maybe even a complete stranger. Any Christian leader worthy of their calling must realize that being in the centre of God's will is the only safe and sure place to be.

Reflect

Reflect on what a conversation about you might sound like if you were to walk into a room where those who knew you were talking about you. Name five worthy character qualities you know you possess, and describe ways in which each quality is seen and evidenced through your life.

Consider what character flaws might be seen by others as they watch your life. Are there things you know need to be addressed, strengthened or changed altogether? If so, jot them down now, and begin today to work on turning your challenges into successes. The first step is, of course, turning to God's Word and studying what it says about other leaders who have gone before us. It is easier to learn from others' mistakes instead of experiencing the pain of making them ourselves.

Read Genesis 39:20-23 and its surrounding text concerning Joseph. Journal your thoughts about God's response to Joseph while he was in prison and reflect on why this was the case.

Consider your own life. Have you experienced situations where you have felt confined, shut out from the rest of the world or left alone, and yet you sensed God's presence and maybe even His kindness, just as Joseph did? Write your thoughts and reflections concerning that time and journal a prayer of thanks to God for His care for you during that situation.

Respond

Find a project to be done that will need to involve others. Consider yourself the “Nehemiah” of the project, the supervisor on the job. It might be redecorating a room, building a set, planning a special service or large event, or some other creative and missional opportunity in your church or community. Then, using the example of Nehemiah, begin to chart out, step by step, the following (both on paper and in real life):

- The talents, abilities, character traits and core competencies you bring to the task as the primary leader.
- Develop a strategy.
- Communicate the vision and direction.
- Find the workers, skilled for the various positions Be cautious not to place people in settings they are not skilled in or passionate about.
- Meet with workers to set out responsibilities Encourage, empower and release them to do the tasks they are called to do. Be sure to follow up and give positive feedback and careful critique.
- Deal with opposition or accusations in a loving and Christlike manner.
- Set realistic and healthy objectives—make and meet deadlines.
- Continuously strive to keep the project moving in a forward manner, with positive reinforcement.
- Pray, fast and rely on God for wisdom and direction throughout the project.
- Work hard in all you do. Be determined and courageous.
- Celebrate the accomplishments together as a team.
- When the project has been finished or the task, accomplished, have a follow-up or follow-through plan for the next phase, just as Nehemiah did in chapter seven.

End Notes

1. Ray Pritchard, *Keep Believing: God in the Midst of Our Deepest Struggles* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 67.

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Module 1
Session 3

**Advocating for
Children's Ministry**

SESSION 3

Advocating for Children's Ministry

by Laura Hulbert-Nickerson and Justin Comber

Children are open books ready to be filled with knowledge. Children's ministry is vital to the life of a child and to the life of their family, and one of the ways that we as a community are able to shape our children is to fill them with the knowledge and understanding of God. There is an old proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." The church has the potential to play a significant part in the shaping of Christian community and, through children's ministries, the raising of children—spiritually and otherwise. With this in mind, the church should place a great deal of importance on children's ministry.

Read

In his book, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, George Barna writes, "The longer you wait to pursue influence, the more difficult it is to counteract the influence of other parties that have been imprinting their values upon our children."¹ The church can play a large role in shaping our children and can also help mitigate some of the other influences they may encounter. Why do we so often settle for barely funded, understaffed, outdated and overlooked children's ministry? Barna also claims that the majority of a person's beliefs are established by the age of 13. This includes their beliefs about the nature of God, the existence of Satan, the reliability of the Bible, the afterlife, the nature of Jesus Christ, whether one can be saved from sin, and the importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives.²

The implications of this are enormous! By and large, the future thought and faith of the church are in the hands of church leadership, both paid staff and volunteer workers. Both have tremendous influence. Children's ministry is extremely important!

The importance of children and ministry to children is emphasized throughout the Bible. It is so significant that the Book of Deuteronomy says that children were to be instructed in the Law so they could carry forward the traditions of God's people. In the New Testament, we see that Jesus took time for children even when adults thought they were in the way. Let's look at a few scriptures from the New Testament to see what Jesus has to say about children.

Take some time to read Matthew 18:2–4 and Mark 9:37; 10:13–31. In both of these Gospels we read about children trying to come and speak to Jesus. In both accounts the disciples saw Jesus being overrun with kids and decided it was a bad idea. The kids were probably getting in the adults' way, and they had likely been waiting for a long time to see Jesus. Being mindful of who was truly important—and following that most civilized of maxims, "Good things come to those who wait"—the disciples shooed the children away. After all, they were noisy, dirty and didn't have the good sense to wait their turn.

How could such impudent creatures be of any importance, right? Wrong! Jesus told the disciples in no uncertain terms that children are important to Him. He wanted to see them. Children are not only welcome in the kingdom, but they are also exemplary of what it means to want to see Jesus. Unless we enter the kingdom like a child, we will never enter it! Jesus not only took time for these children but also picked them up, spoke to them, laid His hands on them and blessed them. There were adults who would do anything (including pushing children out of their way) to see Jesus. But that isn't how Jesus wants to be approached. He took time for these children because they approached Him like children. Shouldn't we be taking the same time and consideration for children? What if we could teach them and learn from them at the same time?

Time and again in the Gospels, we read that Jesus took time to heal children and share love with their parents. The Gospel of Mark tells three of these stories. There, Jesus took the time to give a Galilean father back his dead daughter (5:35–43), to save the daughter of a poor, outcast woman (7:24–30), and to spare a young son from the unstoppable cruelty of his demonic possession (9:14–29). Jesus loves children. In these stories we learn that Jesus cared about children, and that they were important enough to deserve special and repeated attention in the telling of His story.

Children are not only welcome in the kingdom of God, they are exemplary of what it means to want to see Jesus.

What if children's ministry was the priority? Jesus certainly took time to talk with, bless and take care of the children around Him. He even tells us that we should approach Him like a child if we want to enter the kingdom of God.

Children's ministry needs to be more than just a "babysitting" program to keep children busy so that the main church service isn't disturbed. We must remember that families who are looking for a church set their children's needs as a high priority. Leith Anderson writes, "When it comes to choosing churches, the old 'top three' were location, pastor, and denomination(...). The top three today are location, pastor, and children's ministry."³³ Some parents may even claim that it is their top priority. This is right in line with what we read in Deuteronomy 6:5–9. Here, God clearly gives us three commands: Love God with all your heart, remember His commands, and teach the children. God is calling us to teach our children to know Him. We must make it our priority.

We are God's only representatives to the next generation. If we want our children to be taught to love Him, and if we want our faith—faith in Jesus—to thrive in our children and their generation, then now is the time to teach them. You and I bear that responsibility and privilege.

 **Reflect**

Looking back at the scripture, why do you think Jesus was so determined that no one would enter the kingdom of heaven unless they became like a child? How did the children compare to the adults in the story?

In what ways are you committed to ensuring that children are taught God's Word and given solid and consistent opportunities to learn about God and His Son, Jesus, and to experience the power of the Holy Spirit? Is your commitment one that helps to equip parents and families? If not, how can you enhance and strengthen that area of your ministry?

 **Respond**

1. Write your own philosophy of children's ministry. Why are children important? What do you see as their role in the church? Start with the ideals and then work your way down to the practical aspects. What will you do in light of the importance of children's ministry?
2. Write a note or send a text to your fellow teachers and leaders or create a video encouraging them in their work with children. Remind them how important these ministries are and how vital they are to leading the next generation of children.

End Notes

1. George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003), 101.
2. Barna, 32-41.
3. Leith Anderson, "Children are #3." *Enrichment* 4, no.2 (1999): 24.

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Module 1
Session 4

What We Believe

SESSION 4

What We Believe

by Natalie Rogge, Leann Woelk and Kathy Zelman

Have you ever been asked that all-encompassing question, "What does your church believe?"

A rather common response can be to give a description of the organization and its structure while dodging the real "what" response that was asked for in the question. Replies such as "I belong to a fellowship of churches that totals more than 1,200 congregations across the nation of Canada" is quick and to the point. Sometimes we may even be intimidated with the "believe" part of the question, wondering whether the response we give would accurately line up with the beliefs we hold corporately. That is why this session is as important as the others in this leadership course. In order to teach the next generation what it is that we believe, we must know it ourselves and be living it out—so they can know and live it too!

Did you know that The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada has a rich heritage which began in 1919 with a vision to reach the world with the life-saving power of the gospel? In December 1920, the first issue of the Canadian Pentecostal Testimony magazine was published. It contained a letter by the then secretary-treasurer, R. E. McAlister, which spoke of the "opening up of new assemblies."¹ At that time 27 churches were listed on the PAOC records. Less than 20 years later, in May 1939, the Canadian Pentecostal Testimony was able to report over 300 assemblies that were now a part of the PAOC. What substantial growth in those beginning years!

The charter for The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, created in 1919, states three very specific purposes:

- To conduct a place or places of worship
- To organize and conduct schools of religious instruction
- To carry on home and foreign missionary work for the spreading of the gospel

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada also has a mission statement with a three-pronged focus. But as a leader, are you able to quote that mission statement back to someone who is inquiring about your place of faith? The mission of the PAOC as a national Fellowship of churches is:

"To glorify God by making disciples everywhere by proclaiming and practising the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit."



If you have been a part of the PAOC for any length of time, it should be evident to you that this Fellowship of believers desires to make disciples, gather Christians together to create a local body of believers, and teach and equip that body to raise up strong spiritual leaders. It doesn't sound complex. But yet that question, "What does your church believe?" or "What do you personally believe?" makes many want to run in another direction or wish for their cellphone to ring so they can dodge the question. Usually the person asking the question is not looking for someone to recite a lengthy creed or position paper. The word "doctrine" can sound so sterile, and the word "theology" creates the image of complex and mysterious answers buried in commentaries and other inaccessible texts.

As adults, the explanation of what we believe can be deeper and more complex—but for those of us teaching children, simpler responses are better. Giving a child a copy of the PAOC's *Statement of Essential Truths*² will not cut it. Yet it is critical to a child's spiritual development to understand what it is that they believe, and even what scripture says so they can begin to understand why they believe as they do. Our hope is that by the end of this session, you will be equipped to answer those "what you believe and why" questions with confidence and clarity.

Read

As a leader it is so important that you are able to communicate clearly what your church and its leadership believe as you teach the next generation. The following is reflective of the PAOC's *Statement of Essential Truths* and includes some additional comments for those involved in children's ministry. We recommend that you obtain your own copy of this document. The most recent edition can be ordered from The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada International Office.

STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL TRUTHS AND POSITIONS AND PRACTICES

ARTICLE 5 STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL TRUTHS

PREAMBLE

This version of the Statement of Essential Truths represents the result of an extensive collaborative process to rephrase and refresh what is most essential to us. As before, we make no claim that this statement covers all biblical truth, nor that the human phraseology employed here is inspired. We recognize as we did at the outset of our movement that there is some diversity of theological thought among us, but we remain committed as a Pentecostal community to the historic creeds of the church, to evangelical convictions of faith, and to the Full Gospel that Christ is Saviour, Healer, Spirit-Baptizer, and Soon Coming King.

TRIUNE GOD

There is one God, the creator, who exists eternally in unity as three equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹ The triune God is loving, holy, infinite, just, and worthy of all worship.²

The Father accomplishes His plan of salvation through both redemption and judgement.³ All things will be subject to Him, and His kingdom will have no end.⁴

The Father sent the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary when she was a virgin.⁵ Jesus became fully human while remaining fully God.⁶ Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus revealed the Father and the kingdom of God by His sinless life, teaching, and miracles.⁷ After He died for our sins, God raised Him from the dead, and He is now at the right hand of the Father.⁸

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son and gives life throughout creation.⁹ The Spirit draws peoples to repentance and new life in Jesus Christ.¹⁰ Through the Spirits' indwelling, the Father and the Son are present to all believers, making them children of God.¹¹

BIBLE

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the written revelation of God's character and saving purpose for humanity and for all creation.¹² As God's revelation, the entire Bible is true and trustworthy, and is the final and absolute authority for belief and conduct.¹³ The Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible enables its interpretation and application.¹⁴

CREATION

God created and sustains the heavens and the earth,¹⁵ which display God's glory. Formed in the image of God, both male and female, humankind is entrusted with the care of God's creation as faithful stewards.¹⁶ As a result of human rebellion, sin and death entered the world, distorting the image of God and all of God's good creation.¹⁷

Angels were created as supernatural beings to worship and serve God.¹⁸ Along with Satan, some angels chose to rebel and oppose the purpose of God.¹⁹ Christ gives believers victory over Satan and these demons.²⁰

SALVATION

Salvation is available to all people by the loving, redemptive act of the triune God.²¹ Through obedience to the Father,²² Christ gave Himself as a ransom.²³ Christ, who had no sin, became sin for us offering Himself and shedding His blood on the cross so that in Him we might become right with God.²⁴ The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ²⁵ provide the way of salvation for those who, by God's grace, repent from their sin and confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.²⁶

Salvation means to receive the Spirit, to be forgiven, reconciled with God and others, born again, and liberated from sin and darkness, transferring the believer into God's kingdom.²⁷ Our experience of liberation includes healing – whether spiritual, physical, emotional, or mental – as a foretaste of our future, complete restoration.²⁸ Those who remain in Christ and do not turn away are assured of salvation on judgement day by the indwelling Holy Spirit,²⁹ who sanctifies and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.³⁰

SPIRIT BAPTISM

On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus poured out the promised Holy Spirit on the church.³¹ As His return draws near, Jesus continues to baptize in the Holy Spirit those who are believers.³² This empowers them to continue His work of proclaiming with speech and action the good news of the arrival and coming of the kingdom of God.³³ This experience is available for everyone, male and female, of every age, status,³⁴ and ethnicity.³⁵

The sign of speaking in tongues indicated that believers have been baptized with the Holy Spirit³⁶ and signifies the nature of Spirit baptism as empowering our communication, to be His witnesses with speech and action as we continue to pray in the Spirit.³⁷

THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ is the head of the church.³⁸ All who are united with Christ are joined by the Spirit to His body.³⁹ Each local church is an expression of the universal church whose role is to participate in the mission of God to restore all things.⁴⁰

Central to the church is the shared experience of the transforming presence of God.⁴¹ The church responds with worship, prayer, proclamation, discipleship, and fellowship,⁴² including the practices of water baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism by immersion symbolizes the believer's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.⁴³ The Lord's Supper symbolizes Christ's body and blood, and our communion as believers. Shared together, it proclaims His death in anticipation of His return.⁴⁴

The Spirit gives all gifts to the church to minister to others in love for the purpose of bearing witness to Christ and for the building up of the church.⁴⁵ The Spirit also empowers leaders, both female and male, to equip the church to fulfil its mission and purposes.⁴⁶

RESTORATION

Our great hope is for the imminent return of Christ in the air to receive His own, both the living who will be transformed, and the dead in Christ who will be resurrected bodily.⁴⁷ Christ will complete at His second coming the restoration begun when He initiated God's kingdom at His first coming.⁴⁸ Christ will liberate creation from the curse, fulfil God's covenant to Israel, and defeat all powers that oppose God.⁴⁹ Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.⁵⁰

Ultimately, God will judge the living and the dead.⁵¹ Such judgement is God's gracious answer to humanity's cry for justice to prevail throughout the earth and is consistent with God's character as loving, holy, and just.⁵² The unredeemed will go away into eternal punishment, but the redeemed into eternal life.⁵³ The redeemed will enjoy the presence of God where there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain.⁵⁴ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!⁵⁵

ARTICLE 6 POSITIONS AND PRACTICES

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marriage is a provision of God wherein one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others enter into a lifelong relationship⁵⁶ through a marriage ceremony that is recognized by the church and legally sanctioned by the state.

Marriage establishes a "one-flesh" relationship⁵⁷ that goes beyond a physical union and is more than either a temporary relationship of convenience intended to provide personal pleasure or a contract that binds two people together in a legal partnership.

Marriage establishes an emotional and spiritual oneness that enables both partners to respond to the spiritual, physical and social needs of the other.⁵⁸ It provides the biblical context for the procreation of children.

Marriage is to be an exclusive relationship that is maintained in purity.⁵⁹ It is intended by God to be a permanent relationship. It is a witness to the world of the relationship between Christ and His church.⁶⁰

Marriage requires a commitment of love, perseverance and faith. Because of its sanctity and permanence marriage should be treated with seriousness and entered into only after counsel and prayer for God's guidance. Christians should marry only those who are believers.⁶¹ An individual who becomes a believer after marriage should remain with his/her partner in peace, and should give witness to the Gospel in the home.⁶²

The Bible holds family life as a position of trust and responsibility. The home is a stabilizing force in society, a place of nurture, counsel, and safety for children,⁶³ therefore, abuse has no place in a marriage or in the home.

Marriage can only be broken by *porneia*, which is understood as marital unfaithfulness⁶⁴ involving adultery, homosexuality, or incest. While the Scriptures give evidence that the marriage vow and "one-flesh" union are broken by such acts and therefore recognize the breaking of the marriage relationship, the Scriptures do recommend that the most desirable option would be reconciliation.⁶⁵

DIVORCE

We believe that divorce is not God's intention. It is God's concession to the "hardness of men's hearts."⁶⁶

We, therefore, discourage divorce by all lawful means and teachings. Our objective is reconciliation and the healing of the marital union wherever possible. Marital unfaithfulness should not be considered so much an occasion or opportunity for divorce but rather an opportunity for Christian grace, forgiveness, and restoration. Divorce in our society is a termination of a marriage through a legal process authorized by the State. While the Church recognizes the legal process as an appropriate means to facilitate the permanent separation of spouses, the Church restricts the idea of divorce, in the sense of dissolution of marriage, to reasons specified in Scripture.

The weight of the biblical record is negative and the explicit statement is made, "God hates divorce."⁶⁷ Divorce is more than an action of the courts which breaks the legal contract between partners in a marriage. It is also the fracture of a unique human relationship between a male and female. Divorce has profound consequences for the children. Divorce is evidence of the sinful nature expressed in human failure. Jesus gives one explicit cause for the dissolution of marriage: porneia or marital unfaithfulness.

Where all attempts at reconciliation have failed and a divorce has been finalized, we extend Christ's love and compassion.

REMARRIAGE

Remarriage is the union, legally sanctioned by the State, of one man and one woman, one or both of whom have been previously married. It is regarded as acceptable in Scripture in the event of the death of a former spouse. It is also regarded as acceptable if there has been sexual immorality on the part of the former partner or if the former partner has remarried.

GENDER

We believe in the biblical teaching of God's original and ongoing design for humanity as two distinct sexes, male and female, determined by genetics. The basis and the intent for this is the conviction that the matter of human sexuality and gender is fundamental to biblical anthropology, not merely biblical morality. Due to human sin and brokenness, our experience of our sex and gender is not always that which God the Creator originally designed. In light of this foundational understanding of creation, fall, and redemption, we will avoid any behaviour or alignment with identity that contradicts the biblical teaching. We do not affirm the resolution of tension between one's biological sex and one's experience of gender by the adoption of an identity contradictory with one's birth sex.

TITHING

Tithing was divinely instituted by God under the old covenant and was compulsory upon the people who worshiped God.⁶⁸ Under the new covenant we are not bound by arbitrary laws; but the principles of right and wrong, as expressed by the law, are fulfilled in the believer's life through grace. Grace should produce as much as or more than law demanded. Regular systematic giving is clearly taught in the New Testament. It is known as the grace of giving.⁶⁹ The gauge or rule of this systematic giving is defined in the Old Testament, known as the law of tithing. All Christians should conscientiously and systematically tithe their income to God.

These Articles are excerpts from the General Constitution and Bylaws of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and are an integrated part of that governing document. A copy of the PAOC *Statement of Essential Truths* (SOET), including all applicable Scripture references, as adopted by General Conference 2024, can be downloaded at www.paoc.org.

Reflect

As a leader it is so important that you are able to communicate clearly what your church and its leadership believe as you teach the next generation. The following section explain further the PAOC's Statement of Essential Truths and Positions and Practices for those involved in children's ministry. Take time to answer the questions at the end of each theme. It is critical that our teaching aligns to God's Word and what we believe.

Who is the Triune God?

We believe that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three persons and are all eternal. These three are one God. It is important that we help children understand that the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father who came to earth in human form to live a sinless life, perform miracles and teach God's way. He is true God and true man. Jesus died for our sinful ways, then rose from the dead and is now seated in heaven with God. As believers, we await the joyful day when Jesus returns to this earth to gather those who are His followers. The Holy Spirit is also God and is alive in those who confess Christ. He guides, directs, comforts and cares for those who put Christ first in their lives.

Question: How have you experienced God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in your life?

What is the Bible?

We believe that all scripture is inspired by God in the sense that holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write it. The entire Bible, in the original, is without error and is sufficient in authority in all matters of faith and practice. We believe that the Bible is the complete revelation. It is the entire Word of God, not just a portion.

When teaching children, it is good to use a few different versions of scripture and have the children discuss the meaning of the verse so they understand clearly what the Word of God is saying to them.

Question: A life verse is a scripture that holds significance for you, offers guidance and reminds us of what we believe about God and His Word. Do you have a “life verse”? If yes, take time to reflect on your life verse again. If no, ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to where to where to read in the Bible and to highlight a verse that you can than use as your life verse.

What is Creation?

Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God. Adam and Eve fell by sinning when they ate what God had told them not to eat. This act of disobedience and sin began our spiritual and physical death. Humans can be saved only through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God created angels as intelligent and powerful beings to do the will of God and worship Him. Satan was the originator of sin who fell because of pride. He and other fallen angels or demons actively oppose the purpose of God. Because a believer’s body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and Christ dwells in them as Lord, they cannot be possessed by demons.

Question: By being created in God’s image and likeness, how can you bear God’s image in your daily life?

What is Salvation?

Salvation has been provided for all human beings through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Those who repent and believe in Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit and receive spiritual life. They can also experience divine healing. Repentance is a big word for children to understand. It means to be sorry for our sins and to ask Jesus for forgiveness. Justification is another one of those big words. Simply put, it’s “just as if I’ve never sinned.” God declared us righteous when we accept Him as our Saviour.

There are other big words for kids like assurance and sanctification. Assurance of salvation simply means that we are sure of our faith, and that our lives show love, thankfulness and obedience to God. Sanctification means dedicating our lives to God and separating ourselves from evil. This happens both instantly and progressively as we journey through life, repenting and asking forgiveness for the things we do which would not be pleasing to God. We live out the character of Christ as we continuously draw close to Him and learn from God’s Word.

Question: Do your personal values or ‘life principles’ align with the biblical teachings for Christians? If not, what are the differences and why?

What is Spirit Baptism?

As Pentecostals, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience in which the believer gives control to the Holy Spirit and is given power to witness and grow spiritually. All believers

should seek this experience, with the evidence of speaking in tongues. This experience is separate from and subsequent to salvation.

God desires to give special gifts to His children. The gifts of the Spirit are supernatural abilities given by God to believers so they can minister effectively and directly in particular situations. These gifts serve to build up the church and demonstrate the presence of God within His church.

Divine healing is a privilege that believers may experience. Praying for the sick and gift of healing are encouraged and practised. By praying for children's little bumps and bruises when they are young, we are helping them get comfortable with bringing their cares and concerns to a loving God.

Question: As a believer, how have you experienced the Holy Spirit's power in your life?

Who is the Church?

The local church is made up of a body of believers who function as part of the universal church. Believers come together in corporate worship, observe the ordinances of the church, and are instructed in faith and equipped to share it with the rest of the world. Various ministries make up the local church environment. Involvement in ministry is an act of obedience to serve God and give leadership in and to the church.

The Lord's Supper, otherwise known as communion, is a symbol, memorial and opportunity to proclaim the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. All believers are instructed in scripture to participate in this ordinance until Christ returns. Parents should guide their children as to when they should take communion. A child must have made the decision to follow Christ, and their life must be evidence to that decision. This ordinance is much more than grape juice and crackers and should never be taken lightly or without respect.

Water baptism is an outward acknowledgement by the believer of their decision to follow Christ. Again, parents should guide their children at the time when they fully understand what this action means. Participation in both communion and water baptism has more to do with a child's understanding and response to God's leading than reaching a certain age.

Question: If you were teaching lessons in your children's ministry on the church, communion and water baptism, which Bible references would you use?

What is Restoration?

Restoration has been referred to as the end of time or the last days or the theological term for this is "eschatology." It is when the imminent return of Jesus (known also as the second coming of Christ) occurs and He will restore all things to their former perfect state – before sin entered the world. Eschatology is a fascinating subject that contains elements that are vague, even for theologians as to what exactly will happen and when.

It is important that we are clear about what scripture teaches on the end of time developments so that we can teach the next generation in such a way that they can grasp the truth of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. The concepts and detail you share will depend on the age of the children you are teaching (developmental theological understanding will be discussed later in Module 5 Session 3). All children need to know there is an eternity and that the choice is theirs to live for Jesus or not. Children ask questions about death and what happens after as well as what happens when Jesus comes again, therefore we must be ready to know where to direct their questions using the truths of scripture.

Christ's first coming was when He became God in flesh, born as a baby (called "the incarnation"). He was born with the purpose of setting us free from the power of sin and death by living a sinless life to become the perfect sacrifice by dying on the cross paying the penalty for our sin. Christ then was raised from the dead and later ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. Christ's second coming is to complete the restoration of ALL things to their original state before sin entered the world. This includes all of creation.

There are many scriptures in the Old Testament and New Testament that talk about Restoration, many bible scholars have drawn up timelines and sequences of events in an attempt to bring awareness of things to come. Much of these attempts to explain these events were subject to the one interpreting them in their time, culture and society. Scripture and historic understandings from the PAOC Statement of Essential Truths emphasize the following elements: The return of Christ, the resurrection of all people, lifting of the curse on creation, fulfilling Israel's covenant, the final judgement, and eternity.

The Imminent Return of Jesus Christ

The last days actually began after Jesus ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers on the day of Pentecost. From that time on, Christians live in expectation with the great hope of Christ's imminent return at any moment, in which He will come in all power and authority to restore all things. This expectant hope in Restoration is absolutely foundational to our Christian faith.

The Resurrection

All people who died as believers in Christ (whether in the Old Testament believing in the promise of His coming or after Christ's coming, death and resurrection) will rise to meet Christ in the air and their bodies or remains will be transformed into their eternal bodies. These eternal bodies will reflect the type of transformed resurrected body that Christ exhibited after He rose from the dead and before He ascended into heaven. Until that resurrection takes place, when believers die, their soul immediately goes into the presence of Jesus Christ, awaiting the resurrection of their bodies. When an unbeliever dies, their soul remains conscious of impending condemnation at the final judgement.

The Restoration of Creation

In Christ's second coming, God's peace in creation will be restored. Some examples of this will be: wild creatures will become tame, the affects of sin in or around the earth causing

“natural disasters” will be restored to perfection. Christ will completely liberate and lift the curse that came on all of creation as a result of sin entering the world.

Fulfillment of Israel’s Covenant

There will be a revelation of ALL the children of God, Jews and non-Jews from all nations, blessed through God’s covenant to Abraham (Gen 22:18), all as adopted into God’s family because of the redeeming work of Jesus (Eph 2:11-13) and the law of God that has been written on their hearts (Jer 31:33, Deut 31:6).

The Final Judgement and Eternity

Jesus Christ, the King of kings, who possesses total sovereignty will bring to absolute defeat all powers that oppose God. He will complete the reordering of the world according to God’s ordered design, putting death in its place once and for all. All people – believers and unbelievers will acknowledge Jesus for who He is (Phil. 2:10-11) “Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” God’s judgement is consistent with God’s character as loving, holy and just. The unredeemed who chose to reject Christ and His saving power will go away into eternal punishment, known as hell, separated from God’s presence, they will suffer and endure the conditions of death forever. The redeemed will have eternal life, enjoying the loving presence of God, all things made right, where there will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain (Rev 21:3-4).

The final restoration is completely God’s work, made possible by Christ reconciling the world to Himself. It doesn’t depend on anything we do as believers, (2 Cor 5:18) to which we respond in faith and anticipation in prayer as believers, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20). The imminent return of Christ is the Christian’s greatest hope which sustains us in this earthly life, inspires us to share the good news of Jesus to the world, and carries us to our eternal destiny of heaven.

Question: How would you describe each of these events in your own words, while being aligned with what scripture says?

What Does the Bible Say About Marriage and the Family?

Marriage, as ordained by God, is a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. This union is publicly recognized by both the church and the state and is more than just a legal contract or a physical relationship.

Marriage creates a “one-flesh” bond that unites partners emotionally and spiritually. This unique relationship serves as the proper context for having children to become a family where children are nurtured and feel safe, loved and valued in their home.

Building a marriage requires love, perseverance, and faith. Due to its sacred and permanent nature, it should be entered into with seriousness, prayer, and guidance. The Bible states that believers should only marry other believers. However, if a person becomes a Christian after marriage, they should remain with their partner and share the gospel with them.

With its lifelong commitment and purity, a marriage also serves as a testament to the relationship between Christ and His church. The Bible teaches that marriage can be broken only by marital unfaithfulness, which includes adultery, homosexuality, or incest. While these acts break the marriage vow, the Bible encourages reconciliation as the best path forward.

Question: Why are Christ's guidelines for marriage so specific?

What About Divorce?

Divorce is not just a legal act; it is a broken relationship between a man and a woman that has serious consequences, especially for children. Therefore, we discourage divorce and try to help couples reconcile and heal their marriages.

The Bible only gives one reason for a marriage to be truly dissolved: marital unfaithfulness. Where there is unfaithfulness in a marriage, we see it as a chance to show grace, forgiveness, and work toward restoring the relationship. But when all efforts at reconciliation have failed, we offer Christ's love and compassion to those involved.

Question: What are the effects you have seen on families who have faced divorce?

What About Remarriage?

According to the Bible, remarriage is acceptable if the previous spouse has passed away. It is also acceptable if a former spouse was maritally unfaithful or has already remarried someone else.

As leaders in children's ministries, we will have children who are from blended families. We need to learn to embrace families and acknowledge their unique challenges, offering targeted support and connecting families with similar dynamics, which can be very helpful for children and parents.

Question: How have you been able to come alongside a family when remarriage is involved?

Gender is God's Design.

We believe that God created people as either male or female, and that these two genders are part of His good and original design. Because of sin and the brokenness in our world, people may sometimes experience tension between their biological sex and their gender. We believe it is important to honour God's design as taught in the Bible. For this reason, we do not support adopting an identity that goes against the gender we were born with.

Question: If a child came to you asking you about "gender", how would you explain what the Bible clearly teaches?

What is Tithing?

The word “tithe” comes from the Old English word for “a tenth.” Tithing is the practice of giving a portion of one’s incomes – ten percent – to God. While the Old Testament practice of tithing was a law that required people to give 10% of their earnings to God, the New Testament teaches us the “grace of giving.” It is a Christian’s responsibility to conscientiously and consistently give \$1 to God for every \$10 earned, and to do so with a cheerful heart, as the Lord loves a cheerful giver!

It's essential for parents and church leaders to teach children about giving early in life. This practice helps children learn to honour God through this act of worship, to recognize His provision, support the church's ministry, and develop a heart of generosity. There are three main ways we “give to God” with our finances: tithes, offerings, and alms. These three principles are similar yet unique:

- Tithing is giving the first part of what you have to God and thanking Him for His provision.
- Offerings are given as an extra gift because you want to give from what you have been blessed with.
- Alms are gifts you give to people who need help.
- As leaders, we can give children opportunities to practice these principles. For example, on Sundays, we can encourage them to give a tithe from their weekly allowance.

During a church service or midweek activity, we can encourage them to participate in an offering for a special project the church is supporting. And, in home groups, we could visit a family in need and give of what we have in another way. Alms can include not only financial help but also volunteering time to assist others and showing support and compassion to someone less fortunate.

Teaching children to give cultivates a generous heart and aligns them with Jesus’ values. It reminds us to be thankful for everything God has provided and is a powerful way to show His love to others.

Question: How do you understand the practice of tithing in the context of your Christian faith, and what does it mean for you personally?

Respond

Give a short answer for each of the categories of faith listed below as though you are explaining it to an elementary aged child. Be sure to align your response to what God’s Word says, and the PAOC’s Statement of Essential Truths and Positions and Practices provided in this lesson:

Statement of Essential Truths

- Triune God
- Bible
- Creation
- Salvation
- Spirit Baptism
- The Church
- Restoration

Positions and Practices

- Marriage and the Family
- Divorce
- Remarriage
- Gender
- Tithing

End Notes

1. R.E. McAlister, *Canadian Pentecostal Testimony* (Ottawa: R. E. McAlister, 1920), 4.
2. *Statement of Essential Truths* (Toronto: The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, 2024).

Statement of Essential Truths And Position And Practices End Notes

1. Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14
2. Exod 34:6-7; Psa 99:4-5
3. Exod 6:6; Rom 1:16-18
4. Psa 103:19; Rev 11:15; Eph 1:10
5. Matt 1:18-25
6. John 1:1, 14; Col 1:19; Heb 2:17
7. John 1:32; 14:7-10; Luke 4:18-19
8. Acts 2:32-33; Rom 8:34
9. Psa 104:21-30; Acts 2:33
10. John 16:7-15
11. Rom 8:14-17; 1 John 3:24
12. Psa 119; John 20:30-31; Rom 15:4
13. 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12
14. 2 Pet 1:20-21; John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:12-13
15. Gen 1:1; Col 1:15-17
16. Gen 1:26-27
17. Rom 5:12; 8:20-22
18. Heb 1:14; Psa 103:20
19. Rev 12:7-9
20. Acts 10:38; Eph 6:10-13
21. John 3:16; Gal 4:4-7; Titus 2:11-14
22. John 8:28-29; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8
23. Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:6
24. 2 Cor 5:21; 1 John 3:16
25. Rom 4:22-25; 5:19; 6:4-5; Heb 7:24-28
26. Rom 10:9; 1 John 1:9; Acts 3:19; 4:12
27. Eph 2:13-16; Col 1:13-14, 19-20; 1 Pet 1:3
28. Isa 53:4-5; 1 Pet 2:24; Psa 147:3; Rom 8:23
29. Eph 1:13-14; 1 John 4:13; Heb 6:5-6; Phil 3:12-14
30. 1 Thess 4:3-4; 1 Cor 6:11; Rom 12:1-2; 1 Pet 1:2
31. Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33
32. Acts 2:38-39; 8:14-17; 19:1-6
33. Luke 4:18-19, 43; Acts 1:8
34. Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18, 39
35. Acts 10:45-46
36. Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6
37. Acts 1:8; 2:11-43; 4:31; Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 14:15
38. Col 1:18; Matt 16:18
39. 1 Cor 12:12-14
40. Acts 1:8; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 13:1-3; Rev 21:5
41. Acts 2:42-43; 1 Cor 12:7; Matt 18:20; 2 Cor 3:17-18
42. 1 Pet 2:9-10; Col 4:2-6; Acts 2:42
43. Rom 6:3-8; Matt 28:19
44. Matt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:23-26

45. Acts 8:5-7; 1 Cor 12:4-11; 14:12; Heb 2:3-4
46. Eph 4:11-16; Matt 20:25-28; Acts 2:17-18; 6:2-4; Rom 16:7
47. 1 Thess 4:14-17; 5:1-2
48. Matt 13:24-41; Rev 11:15-17; Acts 1:6-7; 3:20-21; Rom 11:25-27
49. Rom 8:19-21; 1 Cor 15:20-26
50. Phil 2:10-11; Isa 45:23
51. Acts 10:42; 1 Pet 4:5
52. Mal 2:17-3:1; Rev 6:9-11
53. Matt 25:46; Dan 12:1-2
54. Isa 25: 8-12; Rev 21:3-4
55. Rev 22:20
56. Gen 2:24; Matt 19:6
57. Matt 19:5; Mal 2:15
58. Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 7:2-5; Heb 13:4
59. Eph 5:3, 26-27
60. Eph 5:25, 31-32
61. 2 Cor 6:1, 14-15
62. 1 Cor 7:12-14, 16
63. Eph 6:4
64. Matt 5:32; 19:9
65. Eph 4:32
66. Matt 19:8
67. Mal 2:16
68. Lev 27:30-32; Mal 3:10
69. 2 Cor 9:6-15

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Module 2

Character

and Accountability



Module 2
Session 1

**Being a Disciple Who
Makes Disciples**

SESSION 1

Being a Disciple Who Makes Disciples

by Natalie Rogge

The word “disciple” simply means learner, student or follower. As someone in children’s ministries or Christian education, we have students. But at the same time as being a teacher, leader, or whatever title may be given to you in the area of ministry you participate in, you are not just a teacher. You must be a learner too. The day we think that we have finished learning, or that we have learned all we need to learn in order to do God’s work successfully, we begin to fail.

The word “disciple” does not imply a static state of being. It is reflective of someone who is growing and improving, continuously stretching themselves to learn. As disciples, we must follow Christ and what He is doing here and now. Too many times as leaders, we can get to thinking that God’s work is dependent on us and that if we don’t do it, it won’t get done. The reality is that if we don’t do it, He will find someone else who will. Or, if we are not in the right place with Him and we are not seeking to be Christlike in our character, He may allow us to stumble and fall so that we can recognize our shortcomings and work to fix them.

It is easy to point the finger at another leader and hold them accountable for our failures and compromises. As leaders who are doing God’s work, we must hold ourselves accountable to living lives of purity and holiness. If we are going to be effective, we must be willing to let Christ shape our character. Being called a follower of Christ implies a lifetime of refining and submission to Him. Let’s consider some of the critical areas of life to which we must dedicate ourselves.

Read

Be Truthful

The Bible is very specific about how we should conduct ourselves in this area:

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.” Exodus 20:16

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer to everyone.” Colossians 4:6

“For, ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.’”
1 Peter 3:10-11

And if those are not enough, check out what it says in Ephesians 4:25, Proverbs 26:20 and 1 Corinthians 13:6.

Being truthful is about more than not lying. Living the truth on a daily basis is allowing others to see your righteousness, or right way of living, according to God’s standards. It is key for us as Christ’s followers to ensure that our words are good, uplifting, and are delivered from a pure heart.

We live in a society where joking jabs, gossip, critical words and skeptical small talk are commonplace. Even a little lie is still a lie. Read the Book of Proverbs to hear the warnings of how harmful thoughtless words can be.

Be Submissive

It is easy to submit when you really enjoy being with the person who is leading. However, too often we can become reluctant to submit when we don't agree with everything our leader does or the decisions they make. We must realize that we are not walking in their shoes, and the decisions before us can sometimes pale in comparison to the decisions before them. Do not judge, lest you be judged. Humility is the character trait that produces proper submission. To be humble does not mean to grovel. Don't focus on what you have or don't have, or where you teach, or the size of your budget line. Instead, do your very best with what you've been given. God's work is never easy. He never promised it would be. Be a person who is genuinely humble. Do what needs to be done, knowing that God will honour your efforts and that the blessing on your life will come from Him. Philippians 4:5 reminds us that our

gentleness should be evident to all, and 1 Peter 5:6 confirms that if we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, He will lift us up in due time.

Don't focus on what you have or don't have, or where you teach, or the size of your budget line. Instead, do your very best with what you've been given.

Work as though you are working for God Himself. Colossians 3:23 very clearly states, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord." When we do this, our attitude will line up with the character and nature of Christ, and any struggle with submission should decrease.

Be Generous

In his book *Soul Salsa*, Leonard Sweet challenges his readers to receive good things gratefully and give it

away in the end. He suggests that we should think of ourselves as trustees rather than stewards.¹ We must be careful not to think of our gifts to God as originating from ourselves, when in reality the opposite is true. Everything we have is entrusted to us by God. A stewardship ethic is based on giving to God a portion of what is ours. A trusteeship ethic is based on receiving for oneself a portion of what is God's. As leaders to whom God entrusts much, we must not hold those things too tightly. Bless others generously and you, too, will be blessed. Sometimes we think our ministry or our personal account is too small to give. 2 Corinthians 8 talks of how the Macedonian churches gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. When we sow generously, there is a promise that we will reap back—generously!

But you might be thinking, "What if we give and it doesn't come back to us?" In Luke 6:30, Jesus declares, "Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back." You may wonder what this has to do with being a good 21st century disciple of Jesus Christ. Well, a lot! Money can be the thing that stands in the way of

our disciplined walk with God. It can be an idol. We can hold grudges against a brother or sister because of it. We can struggle to part with it when God speaks to our hearts.

As disciples of Christ, we must be so in tune with what He is doing on this earth that even our earthly possessions cannot get in the way—especially when everything is His in the first place.

We must raise up a generation that is not consumed with earthly material possessions. This generation is growing up in the most consumerist society we have ever seen. Our example, our teaching, and the opportunities of selflessness in which we engage them can greatly influence where they place their priorities.

Be a Person Who Puts God First

At some point in our ministry to children, we will end up teaching the Ten Commandments. Our Father made it very clear when He told us not to have other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3). Today's idols look very different than the ones back in the days of Moses. Vehicles, televisions, technology, homes, and cottages have replaced Asherah poles and the endless list of gods we read about. Anything that can keep us from giving God our time and attention can be considered an idol in our lives. It's not that God doesn't want us to have nice things. He does. But He is adamant that those things should never take a higher place than He does in our lives.

There are many things we can do in life to show God that we are putting Him first. "God first" is not an option for any believer or disciple of Christ. Those of us who find ourselves in a place of leadership must closely watch the example we set for the next generation. Do our conversations sound like God is being exalted and praised? Do our decisions reflect that we are thinking of God's plans and purposes even before our own? Do our actions show that our lives line up with God's Word and His instructions on how we are to live, and what we should let into our hearts? Proverbs 4:23 warns us to guard our heart, for it is the wellspring of life. We've heard the simple statement, "Garbage in, garbage out." We can work hard to teach it to our children, but do we use the same measuring stick when it comes to what we will view, prioritize or even tolerate?

Be a Knower of the Word

To teach the next generation God's Word in a way that impacts their lives, it must first impact ours. We must know it, study it, memorize it, and live by it. Jesus knew what His disciples needed to learn and when they needed to learn it. Ask the Lord to speak to your heart about what He wants you to focus on next. There are scriptural themes and lessons He wants us to dig into so they can shape our lives, character, and spiritual journey. Pay attention to what He is leading you to uncover in the Word.

Challenge yourself to memorize scripture regularly. Sadly, we often only associate Bible memorization with children in Sunday school settings. We cannot challenge others in what we do not do ourselves. It must change our life first. Whether it is a verse a day, one per week, or a chapter a week, it is doable. Only the enemy will tell you it is not. However, you

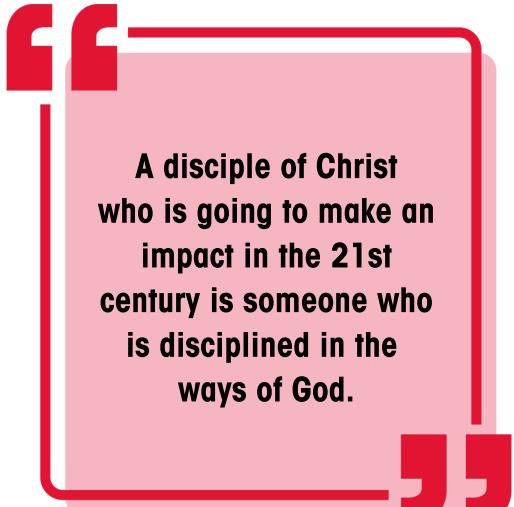
must be determined to make it happen. Have someone hold you accountable in the process. In a recent teaching time with my elementary age students, I challenged them to memorize certain chapters of Psalms, one each week for six weeks. This challenge came about because I really felt God speaking specifically to my heart about the truths of His Word that needed to be grasped by my students for them to walk boldly in Christ and rely on Him for strength and comfort. At first, the students were shocked that I would raise the bar that high and call them to such a place of accountability. Six chapters in six weeks?! But, I was determined to do it right along with them. Together, in a short six-week time frame, we were able to learn, understand, memorize, and recall the following key chapters of scripture in the following order: Psalms 46, 1, 121, 67, 15 and 23.

Each of these chapters has incredible life lessons that are critical for our daily walk with the Lord. One student recalled how when she was hit with sunstroke and needed to be taken to the hospital, it was one of these Psalms that spoke life to her mind and body as she lay on the cot in the emergency ward. God has also used these various passages in my own life as I have found myself quoting back His Word in challenging times. His word is truth. We must know it and understand it if we are to stand on it.

Be Holy

God has called us as Christians to live a holy life, a life that is right, just, and pure in all its ways. This is not only for leaders. It is for every believer who has chosen to follow Christ. There is no exception to this call. 1 Peter 1:15-16 declares, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" As a leader, you will know God's blessings because of your faithfulness to Him and what He has called you to. Have you ever heard someone say that God isn't blessing them, yet they don't pause to examine the way they are living? A disciple of Christ who is going to make an impact in the 21st century is someone who is disciplined in the ways of God.

When we discipline ourselves to put God first in all we do, it becomes much easier to reduce or eliminate the sinful habits that can so easily entangle us. Colossians 3:5 tells us to "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." We are responsible for our own actions. It is our choice to say "yes" or "no" when temptation or evil comes our way. We can teach this to our children and have them repeat, "Say 'yes' to God and 'no' to the devil" over and over again, but unless we ourselves are convinced that living a holy life tops our list of non-negotiables, we will fall when temptation confronts us. We must believe that the pursuit of holiness is worth the effort and pain we will face. When we spend time in God's Word we learn where the boundaries are for holy living. Righteousness simply means "right living." As leaders, we must ask ourselves: Are we living right? Are we disciples of



A disciple of Christ who is going to make an impact in the 21st century is someone who is disciplined in the ways of God.

whom Jesus would be proud? Are we following in His footsteps in ways that would not bring Him sorrow or shame?

If we can live each day with the conviction of Hebrews 12:14b, which says, “without holiness no one will see the Lord,” we will see sin diminish in our leadership circles, and a return to purity and holiness will be celebrated by all.

Selfish ambition is not something God wants us to carry. We must put Him first in all that we do and in all that we say. As we deal with the hindrances that can stand in the way of our being like Christ, we will find ourselves being 21st century disciples … who make other disciples. We all want to produce healthy disciples, but it starts with us, and only we can change ourselves (by the power of the Holy Spirit, of course). Let’s strive to live out the challenge Paul gave when he said, “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

Reflect

This session is about you and only you. Do not allow your mind to wander to issues that may pertain to others. Instead, let your reflections be an open and honest assessment of where you feel you are at in the following areas:

- Telling the truth
- Being submissive
- Being generous
- Putting God first
- Being holy
- Living right
- Being honest with yourself

As you reflect quietly, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you areas of your life where issues need to be brought to light—things that would stand in the way of your living a holy and righteous life. Journal the things you sense the Spirit speaking to your heart and mind.

Are there areas of temptation where you need to hold yourself accountable to say, “no”?

Are there places of compromise in your life that need to be removed? What are they? What can you do to eliminate these things? Do you need someone to hold you accountable? If so, whom will you ask and when?

Is there a complacent spirit about the work of God in your life? Why do you think that is? How can you work to overcome it?

Is there a need to be more controlled in your actions or behaviour so that others can see Christ’s response—and not your own—through you? What do you think triggers those undesirable responses?

Respond

Which steps can you take to begin working on the areas the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during your reflection time?

Consider the following words from St. Francis of Assisi²: Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received — but only what you have given: a full heart, enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage.

What is something you could give away, knowing it would make an impact on another person or on the furthering of the kingdom of God? Take steps to make that happen and journal what you did and how. Write down your feelings after you have followed through. God's Word is life. It will hold us accountable in times of temptation and struggle. It will remind us, when we waver, how we must live. Commit to memory the following three passages of scripture this week:

1. "So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it." *Colossians 3:12-14 (The Message)*
2. "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." *Proverbs 4:23*
3. "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." *Philippians 4:8-9*

End Notes

1. Leonard, Sweet, *Soul Salsa* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010)

2. St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) was an Italian friar who lived in Italy in the 13th century.

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Module 2
Session 2

**Learning From Jesus
and His Twelve**

SESSION 2

Learning From Jesus and His Twelve

by Natalie Rogge

Every team has a coach, every plane has a captain, every church has a pastor, every school has a principal, and every class has a teacher. People work best when there is a leader to follow.

Jesus was an extraordinary leader who chose twelve individuals to be part of His team. It was like a training academy, an apprenticeship. The individuals He chose had just a little more than 18 months of preparation to get ready for the great task that was going to be handed over to them—to launch and grow what we know today as “the church.” What a huge responsibility to prepare for!

None of the disciples could have been confident in their qualifications for the job. In fact, they didn’t even know what the job was going to be. All they knew was that Jesus had found them and simply uttered the words, “Follow me.” They were chosen. They were set apart from the others on the boats or in their towns and villages. They were the ones selected for training who would carry the gospel.

Have you ever wondered what qualified them? Probably the most important thing was that they said “yes.” There wasn’t one who came up with excuses or reasons why they could not join the team. They did not even ask for a rotation because of their busy schedules, nor did they request specific teaching environments or supplies. They didn’t specify “small group” or “large group” preferences; they just followed.

Jesus Christ, and the way He led, brought transformation. Let’s consider 12 characteristics of how Jesus led and discipled those who were on His team by looking directly at God’s Word.

Read

He was Disciplined

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35

Being disciplined means creating positive life habits that will enhance your character. Having strong character will cause others to respect you. As leaders, we expect those we work with to be disciplined to show up on time, be prepared, be diligent and committed, speak wisely and cautiously, be people of the Word, etc. If these are our expectations, we must set the same example. Leaders are always needed—people don’t necessarily want to hear from the assistant. They want the person in charge. Jesus knew the people were looking for Him, but He was committed to being disciplined. Schedule time away on your calendar. Make sure that it happens, and that it is not filled with other things that call your name and require your attention. Take time alone to pray and hear from God.

He Taught With Authority

"The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." Mark 1:22

Having authority as a leader shouldn't make you bossy. You should not be like a traffic cop who dictates directions and tells people when to stop and go. Jesus gained His authority from the Father, yet He intentionally passed that same authority on to His team, empowering them to lay hands on the sick or cast out demons. Invest in those who are following you, especially those who are younger. Be confident that, just like Jesus, you will not be around forever, and God's work will need to go on with power and authority. Teach your students about the power the Holy Spirit gives so they can be bold witnesses.

He Had a Goal in Mind

"Come follow me" Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.'" Mark 1:17

Jesus was very intentional. He knew what He wanted to develop in His leadership team. Set goals as you lead, first for yourself, then for your entire team. Don't set goals for others without first setting them for yourself. Lead by example and celebrate when goals are reached. Be careful not to limit your goals to the number of children in attendance. Although you always want to see your classes and congregations increase in size, depth of teaching and transformation of lives are what matters most.

He Knew He Was Loved By God

"And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" Mark 1:11

The children and leaders you lead must know that you love them and care about them personally and as part of the team. Make phone calls to your team, check to see how they are. Follow up when there are medical issues. Drop off a card of encouragement or get together for a coffee or tea. Those things, though they seem small, will go a long way to keeping people on the team. They must know and feel they are loved and accepted. This is especially important for those who feel insecure about their teaching, though the secure ones will also appreciate friendship with leaders.

The children and leaders you lead must know that you love them and that you care for them personally.

He Knew His Purpose

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Mark 2:17c

Always focus on reaching the lost and then discipling them until they are able to stand strong spiritually on their own. Be careful not to spend the majority of your time with your peers and neglect to rub shoulders with the whole community.

He Chose His Company Intentionally

“While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.” Mark 2:15

Some of the best team members are those who feel like family. In a family, meals are shared and secrets are kept. Life can be busy and full, but it is very important to schedule time to build relationships. Meals, a golf game, a shopping excursion, a day at the beach, a coffee break, or a trip to the zoo all help to build relationships. Don’t always do things alone when you can build relationships with others who need encouragement or need to hear how God is working in your life.

He Knew That He Would Face Temptation

“At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan.” Mark 1:12-13a

When you are living out God’s Word, you must know that temptation will come your way and the enemy will seek to distract and even destroy. Realize it, call it what it is, and be mindful of it. When your eyes are fixed solely on Christ, the devil will realize he has no foothold. Remember, God’s power is far greater than anything the enemy will try to throw at you.

He Taught as He Walked

“A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.” Mark 2:13b

It is obvious in scripture that Jesus taught everywhere He went. His life was a “walking textbook,” and an example of what He wanted us to emulate. In all you say and do, be sure that your words and actions line up with the instructions we have been given on how to live. God’s Word is our instruction book for living. Our lives should not be based on the latest self-help book or we might find ourselves in trouble.

He Lived with His Eyes Open

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.” Mark 6:34

Jesus was always looking for and aware of moments where He could teach a lesson or share a message that was relevant to the listener or the crowd. Likewise, we should always look for opportunities to teach and share God’s love and His plan for mankind. These opportunities come in the middle of our everyday activities; we just need to recognize them and know how to engage in conversation that is attractive and inviting.

He Was a Storyteller

“So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables.” Mark 3:23a

Jesus told stories because He knew they would capture the attention of the mind and the heart of the listener. Work consistently on being a good teller of stories. Practise lots. Tell Bible stories in many different ways, knowing that each time you tell it, the listener can and will receive a new truth from the same story. Jesus modelled good storytelling many times in the New Testament. The Old Testament is also a reminder to us as believers to open our mouths in parables and tell of the hidden things that others may not see. We are to tell the next generation about the things God is doing. We are to speak of His wonders and power so this next generation will also put their trust in Him and keep His commandments (Psalm 78:2-7). It is crucial that we tell the stories of what He is doing in us and around us today. Modern stories of God's favour, His goodness, and His miracle working power can and will transform lives.

He Gathered His Team Together

"Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed."
Mark 3:7

Jesus valued His followers and poured into their lives. As the leader of a team, your team must know you and how you operate. They must be comfortable with your actions and your reactions. This is learned by being close. Work as a team. Collaboration is key to a successful team. You cannot call yourself a team leader if you are not providing leadership to your team.

He Took Time Away

"Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'" Mark 6:31

As a leader, someone will always be calling your name asking you to get involved because of your abilities. Don't say "yes" to everything. Carefully consider what is truly worthwhile and aligns with God's plans for your life. Do not neglect your family or your time with God because you feel that others need you. We cannot pour out of an empty vessel, either for our church or for our family.



Reflect

We are always leading, yet we rarely take the time to reflect on the character and leadership we bring to both the table and the team. Only in recognizing and acknowledging our weaknesses are we able to work on them. However, we must also acknowledge the strengths we have been blessed with so we can ensure that they are being used for God's purposes.

1. Take time to list the various teams you have been on in your lifetime, including those you are presently a part of.
2. In your list, record why you liked/enjoyed being part of the team. List reasons for the team's success.
3. Now identify the various teams or groups of people that you presently have influence over. Record each one, including your family, your place of employment, your volunteer effort, your teaching responsibilities, etc.
4. Make two columns beside your list of teams. In the first column, record the ways your leadership with your team reflected the ways of Christ. Reflect on the 12 ways set out in the "Read" section of this session and any other ways you can think of where Jesus showed strong leadership. In the second column, honestly analyze in which your leadership may not have been a great or honouring reflection of the Master. When you have finished, pray and ask the Lord to help you in the areas of leadership where you may be weak.

Respond

Write down the names of two individuals you have discipled. What are some of the intentional things you did in your relationship with them that helped to shape their spiritual life?

Jesus chose His group of disciples to begin the church on this earth. What revolutionary thing is God speaking to your heart about so that His kingdom here on this earth would be advanced?

Ask yourself: Who should be part of your team, and what gifts or skills of value would they bring to the table?

Set realistic deadlines to begin working on what God is leading you into. If you don't set dates and share the vision with someone who can hold you accountable, you will quickly realize that many good and well-intentioned visions amount to nothing more than talk.

Remember, the leader must take the initiative and set the direction. Don't keep waiting for someone else to do what God may be asking you to head up. Don't wait for Him to give you all the steps or all the money; run with what He gives you and watch how He will bless your efforts and multiply them. He needs to know that He can trust us, and that we are willing and committed to the call He's placed on our lives.

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Module 2
Session 3

Being a Team Player

SESSION 3

Being a Team Player

by Graham Greenwood

Henry Ford once said: “Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”¹ History has shown us that strong leaders work with the help and support of others. Being part of a team is by design (God called it the body of believers), and we each have a part according to our abilities (also known as our gifts) and passions.

If you’re working through this course, you most likely have been given a position or responsibility by your church’s lead pastor and board or another church staff leader in a position of authority. This session will offer practical principles that will help you develop and maintain a healthy relationship with your church’s leadership. After all, you’ve been identified as someone with the appropriate mix of talent and passion to bring leadership to a vital area of the church. Being asked to lead is a great honour and high calling.

Before you read any further, let that reality sink in. You were asked to lead. Others in the church identified knowledge, talents, and skills in your life that they believe will help move the church forward. They agreed that you have the capacity to identify ways to effectively evangelize and disciple children. A great trust has been placed in you.

Working on a team inevitably involves conflict. There will be differences of opinion on the best way to allocate resources such as money, facilities, people, different thoughts on what needs to be promoted (and how), and the best way of managing competing priorities. Finding fulfilment and joy in ministry means that you need to learn to lead in the midst of these tensions. This session consists of some thoughts and strategies to help you do just that.

Read

We’re on the Same Team

Everyone wants the church to grow and thrive. There is probably a strong consensus on what a growing and thriving church looks like. You most likely agree on the goal. Most often, it’s the strategies to meet that goal that are up for debate.

Think of it this way—you are on a team that wants to win and is trying to work out the best strategy to win. Discussion, disagreement, and debate are all part of the process of coming to a winning strategy—one that is better because it was made together and reflects the strengths of all involved.

Share the Vision

Your primary source of direction and vision for your ministry should come from the alignment

of God's call for you and the vision and direction you receive from the church's leadership—your lead pastor and board. Your church has a unique call, and you need to know it because it is different from the one that God has given to the church down the road, and from the vision that so many will try to sell to you. Conferences, books, websites and other churches can help refine and shape your ministry, but the vision needs to be trumpeted by you and be in line with the vision of the church leadership.

So, how do you get to know the vision your lead pastor has for the church? There are several great ways to find out:

- Know the stated and unstated goals and dreams of the church. What is the mission or vision statement?
- Pay attention to recurring themes in sermons, announcements, reports, and e-mails.
- Notice what the leadership gets excited about.
- When your church has a united vision and purpose, God will spread His blessings and your life and ministry will be fruitful.

Focus on Serving

Servants are expected to do what is asked of them with the resources provided—they can't be expected to produce a steak dinner if they are given only a hamburger. Once you

have defined a shared vision with your leadership, ask for the resources you need to fulfil it. If, like most of us, you get back less than what you think you need, do the best you can with what you have. In all things, trust God to provide the missing elements. He can (and will) bless your best efforts. A good steward of limited resources is much more likely to be entrusted with more resources than a wasteful steward.

Servants are expected to do what is asked of them with the resources provided - they can't be expected to produce a steak dinner if they are given only a hamburger.

Live Up to Your Own Standards

You can't expect your volunteers to put things away properly if the workroom or your office is a disaster.

Likewise, you can't expect the youth department to leave the room ready for you if you don't extend the same courtesy. Before getting too agitated over the wrongs done to you, make sure you are living up to your own standards.

Be an Encourager

Boards and leadership teams spend a lot of time grappling with problems. They are responsible for answering to those who ask them difficult questions, who point out weaknesses or blind spots in the church's ministries, or who are simply unhappy. Whenever possible, be the one to bring positive reports and talk about opportunities for ministry and evangelism.

Be a Problem Solver

Being a servant allows us to focus on leading with what we have. It can also help sharpen

our problem-solving skills. A tendency to complain will make us part of the problem. So, how can we be a part of the solution? Be proactive. If a teacher isn't doing a great job, train them. If the current teaching strategy isn't working, look for ways to fix it or consider a new one. If a facility is drab, freshen it up.

With some issues—especially those that impact other departments—it's good to keep others aware of what we are doing. If possible, follow each challenge you share with, "and this is what we're doing about it." For example, if your registration process is making people late for church, make sure that the team knows you are aware of the problem and working on it.

If you build a reputation as a leader who knows your own problems, you are more likely to find people who are willing to help you when you run into problems that require extra help, new resources or just extra grace!

Extend Grace to Others

You probably didn't plan for the object lesson to colour the wall purple. The worship leader probably didn't plan for the new song to fall flat on Sunday. It is easy to see these things in hindsight and easy to suggest what should have been done differently. We can learn from hindsight but can only live life forward. We should extend grace to others and pray for the same grace when we need it. There are lots of willing armchair critics. Don't be another.

Have Others Tell Their Story

Rather than being the messenger, encourage others to share their positive experiences as volunteers in your ministry. Allow parents to share the impact your church has had on their kids. Firsthand accounts from different sources will be a great source of encouragement for the church and a motivator for others to get involved.

Take Some for the Team

You can't always get your way. Sometimes you need to yield to another ministry or leader. Do so willingly. You will earn trust and make it much more likely that others will do the same for you in the future.

Reflect

Jesus taught us that to be first we needed to be last (Matthew 19:30). To lead, we need to serve. Jesus took on the menial, humbling task of washing His disciples' dirty feet. It was nothing like the modern foot washing ceremony with clean towels on a carpeted church platform—it was a messy, dirty, dusty, smelly, and humbling job (John 13:3-17).

Think for a few moments about the tasks or responsibilities you don't want to do or won't do. Why? Can you defend your rationale for not doing something for the church in the context of Jesus' example?

In the context of being willing to serve as part of your church's leadership team, write out what you believe your calling to be in the church. What role do you play on the team?

Next, ask yourself if you are carrying burdens that you shouldn't. Are you more concerned about the actions of the youth leaders or the song selections of the worship leaders than the teaching content of the children's ministry? Choose to let go of the problems that are not yours to solve and focus on the ones that are yours.

Respond

1. Identify five success stories in your children's ministry. These can be reports of kids accepting Jesus, copies of prayers that children have written, letters or comments from parents, or feedback from volunteers. Write them down and share one each month with your church leadership team.
2. Identify the three biggest challenges or obstacles facing your church's children's ministry right now. Then identify three simple steps you can implement immediately to begin addressing those problems. Implement them immediately! Repeat this exercise often.
3. Identify a task that no one wants to do in your church and quietly do it this week as an act of obedience and humility. It might be washing the dishes in the staff room, shovelling the snow or dealing with a "high needs" member of the congregation.

End Notes

1. Henry Ford (1863-1947) was the founder of Ford Motor Company.

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Module 2
Session 4

**Abuse Prevention
Best Practices**

SESSION 4

Abuse Prevention Best Practices

by Hailey Armoogan

While we want our local churches to be warm, welcoming places for all, we must also ensure the care and protection of those who enter our doors. Churches are one of the most vulnerable spaces, as we have a high level of trust, acceptance and seek out the good in every person. Due to the trusting environment of the local church and the assumption that everyone who enters a church has pure motives and good intentions, the church is often vulnerable to those who wish to do harm.

It is the responsibility of the leadership of the local church and its volunteers to ensure that policies and practices are established, implemented and reviewed to ensure that all who enter the doors of their church are cared for and protected to the best of their ability. Every local church is required to have insurance coverage that includes liability and indemnity. For this coverage to be active and applicable, a local church must have an abuse prevention policy in place which meets the requirements of the church's insurer. Policies may vary, but there are some basic expectations that most policies require of a local church in order to insure them. Check your church insurance policy and know what you are obligated to include in your policy. Abuse prevention policies care for and protect those who participate in church life and those who serve in leadership roles.

An abuse prevention policy can be obtained from a third-party organization and customized to your local church context, or you can create your own policy based on the requirements of your insurer.

Abuse prevention policies care for and protect those who participate in church life and those who serve in leadership roles.

Read

Take a moment to read and review your church's Abuse and Prevention Policy. Every church in Canada that has insurance is required by law to have an Abuse Prevention Policy/Child Protection Policy that protects minors, anyone under the legal age of the majority, vulnerable adults and those who serve them. Does your church's Abuse Prevention Policy reflect the values of your local church? Is it fully implemented? The following checklist is provided by Robertson Hall Insurance¹, outlining the best practices of what is required in an abuse prevention plan.

Statement of Policy

This is a formally approved and implemented document that is annually reviewed by your church board or council. It should outline and affirm your church's commitment to providing a safe environment for minors (under the age of majority) and vulnerable adults

with zero tolerance for any form of abuse. The policy should reflect your church's statement of faith, biblical standards and the duty of care that should be given to individuals. It should be very clear in the policy that its purpose is to prevent harm to children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in programs and activities of your church, as well as provide protection to staff and volunteers from false or wrongful allegations.

Definition

What abuse is and related issues should be clearly defined to church staff and volunteers so that they will be able to identify unacceptable behaviours.

Screening

Anyone serving in a position of authority and interacting with children, youth, and vulnerable adults should be appropriately screened before released to serve in a place of leadership and care with minors and vulnerable adults. The screening process should include the following steps:

- Targeted recruitment
- Volunteer application completed and submitted
- Personal interview
- Background reference checks
- Initial criminal record checks for all new workers, including vulnerable sector search (if applicable)
- Criminal record re-checks for existing workers every five years or less

There should be a minimum waiting period of six months before an individual is invited to volunteer in your church. They should be regularly attending your church and involved in the life of the church. This waiting period and screening process can be challenging for new Canadians who are part of your church, who may have come from a country that does not offer the necessary documentation for screening. In situations where reliable screening cannot be done, the best practice is to process and place the individual into a ministry role with the same parameters of a youth volunteer, whereby they are not in a position of trust.

Operational Procedures

A written manual outlining your church's specific guidelines for preventing abuse and harassment of minors and vulnerable adults is essential. This manual should outline your leadership structure and approach, the two adult rule, appropriate ways of communicating with children and youth, and use of social media, health and safety protocols for young children, disinfection of toys, illness, emergencies, avoiding activities that place participants and leaders in vulnerable positions in person, digitally and virtually, proper documentation and filing of all reports, ratio guidelines for minor adult leaders, incident report forms and processes, and an annual auditing system. Operational procedures are requirements which can also include best practices.

Premises

Wherever your church meets, needs to ensure a safe and secure environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults to meet in. Rooms with windows, designed hall/room monitors circulating throughout spaces being used by minors and vulnerable adults, and controlled access are significant to providing safe and welcoming spaces. If your church meets in a rented space or is in an older building, you may be limited in what changes you can make. Find creative and sustainable ways to ensure that spaces are safe, accessible, and well-maintained.

Training

All church staff members and volunteers who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must regularly participate in training that equips them to assist with abuse prevention. Training done in-person or online will help staff and volunteers know and understand their legal obligation to report any suspected abuse and will help staff and volunteers recognize the signs of abuse. Regular refresher training helps staff and volunteers remain aware of expectations and abuse prevention practices.

Responding

A church must have a process for responding to allegations or complaints of abuse that is consistent and appropriate. The process should include completing incident reports, satisfying legal obligations to report all cases of suspected abuse to law enforcement authorities or child protective agencies, consulting a lawyer for advise, communicating care to complainants without admitting legal liability, maintaining confidentiality or information at all times, immediately suspending the involvement of the alleged perpetrator while there is an investigation and avoiding making public statements to the media, on social media, to the congregation and any other group without having obtained legal counsel and contacting your insurer for assistance.

In Canada, it is the law to report suspected abuse. Don't try to investigate or assess on your own. Do what the law requires and report. It is always our hope that you will never experience or have to report abuse in any form. However, to serve everyone who enters our church buildings, is a part of our faith community or sent from our local church to serve in the greater community, we need to ensure safety, care and protection to the best of our ability.



Reflect

Meditate and reflect on Micah 6:8 and John 13:34-35. What are those bible verses telling us about how we treat others? How does our conduct as individual followers of Jesus and the community of faith impact others? What challenges you in these two texts?

Respond

What do you feel is the overarching value that should guide Abuse Prevention Policies?

How can you create a culture of care and protection in your local church?

If your church does not have an up-to-date Abuse Prevention Policy or needs to update its policy, check out our Mission Canada Resource links to see the most updated template documents for an Abuse Prevention Policy provided by our PAOC District Children and Family Ministry Specialists.

End Notes

1. Robertson Hall Insurance Inc. "Abuse Prevention Made Easy(er): Effective Prevention for Churches and Charities." Updates 2024 Newsletter, November, 2024.

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Module 3

Having a Plan for Ministry



Module 3
Session 1

**Hearing God's Voice for
Your Life and Ministry**

SESSION 1

Hearing God's Voice for Your Life and Ministry

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

All my life people have told me that I have a Type A personality. I always took it as a compliment. "A" is for "Adorable," right?! After hearing this several times, I became rather curious and went and looked up the actual definition and description. I discovered that typical Type A people are very time conscious. They will most likely get frustrated while waiting in line, they tend to interrupt others often (ouch!), they walk or talk at a rapid pace, and are always painfully aware of the time and how little, if any, they have to spare. They are usually impatient, competitive, have a strong achievement orientation, and can produce under a high amount of pressure. Sounds great, yet it went on to explain that all of these attributes can often lead to premature death due to stress related diseases. Wow ... that's encouraging! Oh, and have I mentioned that Type A individuals can often be sarcastic? After reading those characteristics, I was reminded of the story of Martha and Mary from God's Word. Martha had a Type A personality. The Amplified Bible brings this to light in Luke 10:40, "But Martha (overly occupied and too busy) was distracted with much serving; and she came up to Him and said, Lord, is it nothing to You that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me (to lend a hand and do her part along with me)!"

This story, familiar to most, tells us how Martha was preparing a feast for Jesus while Mary was feasting in the Lord's presence. You've probably heard dozens of sermons on this passage challenging you to spend more time in the intimacy of the Lord's living room. Yet, as children's ministers, we can often end up feeling stuck in the busyness of the kitchen. After all, it is your responsibility to plan lessons, make schedules and recruit and train volunteers, just to mention a few. Still, Jesus calls us to dwell with Him in the warmth of His presence. Spending time with the Lord and seeking His face is to our advantage.

Read

Let me stir your reflections with four questions that will help you to attune your life with God's heart.

What inspires you?	Information vs. Revelation
Who's leading you?	Called vs. Driven
How are you serving God?	Ministering to and through the Lord
What defines you?	Values vs. Habits

Information vs. Revelation

Jesus was a great rabbi respected by His contemporaries (Matthew 19:16, 22:35-36;

Luke 4:40, 12:13, 19:39, 20:27–28). He was an educated man. From the time Jesus was 12 years of age, He challenged the religious leaders in the temple (Luke 2:41–52). He taught crowds with parables, and people saw Him as a genius in the things of God. Jesus had all the information about the history of His people. He went through extensive studies of the Torah and Talmud, memorizing large portions of it. But how was He so different from any other honoured members of the Jewish people?

Don Everts, in his book *Jesus with Dirty Feet*, reflects on the marvel of Jesus' ministry.

He was like no one anyone had ever seen. There was something so clear and beautiful and true and unique and powerful about Jesus that old rabbis would marvel at his teaching, young children would run and sit on his lap, ashamed prostitutes would find themselves weeping at his feet, whole villages would gather to hear him speak, experts in the law would find themselves speechless, and people from the poor to the rugged working class to the unbelievably wealthy would leave everything to follow Him.¹

Jesus was different because He taught fresh revelation from God. This is how He knew where to go and what to say. For us as leaders and followers of Jesus, it must be no different.

I encourage you to attend conferences, and to read books on leadership and how you can better teach children about God. I challenge you to listen to podcasts of great children's ministry leaders. Listen to the experience of your peers and look at how other people do it. Get inspired by smart and devoted volunteers who are filled with the Holy Spirit. Place yourself in positions where you can benefit from other people's experiences. All these things are good and helpful. But none of them can lead you into God's "sweet spot" for your life and ministry. We must realize and live out each day knowing that God is here and that He wants to reveal fresh and new things to you about who He is, who you are and what you should do to further His kingdom work. Pray and listen to the Word of God. Let God's Spirit be your primary instructor and inspiration source. Only He can take you to places no one else has ever been before.

Called vs. Driven

In Ordering your Private World, Gordon MacDonald differentiates between called leaders and driven leaders.² Being "driven" is a quality that leaders today believe they must have to succeed. Driven people are hardworking and focused. They get the job done. In many of our circles, this is how we define success. We admire those who shine. But are these qualities that we should really admire? You can be driven by recognition or pride. You can be driven by the overwhelming amount of work to be done. Is being driven what God's work is really about or are we simply exhausting ourselves in our efforts to please Him? Remember Martha?

You can exhaust yourself for the cause of the ministry, doing things that God has not asked you to do in the first place.

A “called” leader will find more success in the long run. Since their private calling from God guides their steps in their public world, they more fully understand who they are because God has shown them first who they are not. The driven leader asks God to bless what they are doing. You can exhaust yourself for the cause of the ministry, doing things that God has not asked you to do in the first place. The called leader humbly follows God’s leading. God is the ultimate leader and conductor of all ministry—yes, this includes ministry to children too! Remember, He cares about those kids more than you do, and He cares about you too.

Ministering To and Through the Lord

Ministering *TO* the Lord means that we work as if God Himself benefits from our actions. Colossians 3:23–24 explains this well: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Jesus Himself had this to say about those who care for the needy: “I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!” (Matthew 25:40b, NLT). You may get praise from people, or you may not. One thing is sure: God sees all you do, and He also sees the attitude of your heart. As those who minister to others, we are accountable to people, but ultimately our life song should play for an audience of ONE.

Ministering *THROUGH* the Lord means that we minister through the inspiration and empowerment that God provides. Imagine what it would feel like to truly understand and live out the power of God in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9) and the empowerment that comes from His Spirit (Romans 15:13, 1 Timothy 1:14).

Mother Teresa summed up these two principles in her famous interview for *TIME Magazine* written by Edward W. Desmond, “We try to pray through our work by doing it with Jesus, for Jesus, to Jesus. That helps us to put our whole heart and soul into doing it. The dying, the crippled, the mentally ill, the unwanted, the unloved—they are Jesus in disguise.”³

Values vs. Habits

Your actions are driven by your values. You will go to the gym because you value physical health. You will choose to go out on a date night with your spouse because you value your marriage. Values are traits or qualities that are considered worthwhile. They represent your highest priorities and most deeply held beliefs. Your values will shape your actions, and your actions will determine what you are known for. What do you want to be known for?

Your personal values are determined by everything that has happened to you in your life and are influenced by your parents and family, your personal beliefs, your peers, your education, and what you see, hear and read to name a few. Effective people recognize

these environmental influences and identify them before writing out a clear, concise and meaningful list of values. Doing this can help you define priorities and make effective decisions in all aspects of your life. The same goes for when you identify values for your children's ministry. Living your values is one of the most powerful tools available to help you become the person you want to be, to aid you in accomplishing your goals and dreams, and to assist you in leading and influencing others.

Habits are behaviour patterns which are repeated to the point that they become settled tendencies. Habits are involuntary behaviours that we have adopted over time by sheer repetition. Just like people, organizations have habits. For example, some ministries operate on the principle of the "well-oiled machine." Why change a program that runs smoothly for the staff and volunteers? However, is the fact that a program runs without any glitches reason enough to replicate it week after week, year after year? Whose need is being met by this approach: the organization's needs or those of the children to whom they minister?

Our programs should be evaluated considering the church's values. If discipleship and creativity are core values, then the children's ministry program should be evaluated against those values. It is best to ask questions like, "Does this program meet the needs of the kids in our neighbourhood?" or "How can we improve in delivering our message to kids?"

Every aspect of ministry should be assessed in order to identify the repeated weekly, monthly, and seasonal patterns. These patterns or habits must be examined taking into account the reasons that motivated them in the first place. Do our programs, routine activities, and ministry habits reflect the values we want to be known for? Have we traded our intentionality and creativity for the sake of convenience and routine? Is our weekly gathering a reflection of what we hold to be the most important Christian values? We must put our life and ministry under the microscope at times and honestly examine and evaluate what we are about and why. It is important to identify the values that you and your church hold. Identify the habits and repetitive patterns you see in your church, your department, and your personal ministry. Are those deeply held beliefs and values reflected in the way things are done? If they are, keep doing what God has called you to. If they are not, then maybe it's time for some change to happen. Be sure to ask God what He wants and then respond accordingly.

Reflect

Take some time to reflect on Paul's words in Colossians 1:9–12. Read this passage in a few different versions of Scripture.

Also, let's reconsider the passage you reflected on back in the first session as you were just beginning this course, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely

and lightly.” (Matthew 11:28–30, The Message)

Be honest and transparent with yourself. Take a look at your life and ministry under the microscope as you honestly ask yourself the following questions:

- Are my mind and spirit attuned with God’s will for my life and ministry?
- What do I need to do to learn “how God works”?
- Do I take notice of how God is working in my day-to-day activities? Do I join Him or am I about my own agenda?
- Am I driven by a desire to please others, by a title, by a need, or even by recognition?
- What does it mean for me to be called by God?
- Am I feeling that I live in a place of health and longevity as I spend time with God?
- Do I allow time in my daily life for God to reveal His ministry plans to me?

Proverbs 20:12 confirms that God gives us ears to hear and eyes to see. Are you asking Him for new revelations as you are about His work?

Get a clear perspective on the vision and ministry plan for your church at large. Talk with your lead pastor about the things that influence your church culture—vision, target audience, church history, leadership styles, and future direction of the church. What has your church been known for in the community? What do you want your church to be known for five years from now? What is God stirring in your heart and what is He giving you a passion for?

Respond

How is your daily devotional, prayer, and worship time going? Look inward and give yourself an honest evaluation. What about this time is drawing you closer to the Lord and causing you to hear His voice for your life and ministry? What about your time with God could be better? Starting today, what would you do to enhance your time with the Lord?

Review the following list of values. Circle 20 values that best describes you. Then pray and consider the list again, asking Holy Spirit to help you narrow your focus down to 10, then again, filtering your personal list of values down to four or five. Then, make a short list of those four or five values and write down a few ways you are currently living out each value. Now consider some other ways you could live out those selected values. Spend time with God, listening to His voice and allowing Him to tell you how you could better or more effectively live out those values, or maybe some of the other values from the larger list. For instance, if “friendship” is one of your values, you could set a goal of getting together with others who are part of your larger ministry team for a meal. You may want to start calling a friend or two each week to show care and also to pray together.

COMMON VALUES

Achievement	Faith	Practical
Accountability	Faithfulness	Progress
Accuracy	Family	Punctuality
Adventure	Flexibility	Quality of work
Balance	Freedom	Regularity
Beauty	Friendship	Reliability
Character	Fun	Resourcefulness
Challenge	Generosity	Respect for others
Change	Global view	Responsiveness
Children	Goodness	Results
Collaboration	Gratitude	Safety
Commitment	Hard work	Service
Communication	Harmony	Simplicity
Community	Honesty	Skill
Compassion	Honour	Solutions
Competence	Improvement	Stability
Connection	Independence	Stewardship
Continuous learning	Innovation	Strength
Cooperation	Integrity	Success
Coordination	Intensity	Teamwork
Courage	Justice	Timeliness
Creativity	Joy	Tolerance
Decisiveness	Knowledge	Tradition
Discipline	Leadership	Tranquility
Discovery	Learning	Trust
Diversity	Love	Truth
Efficiency	Loyalty	Unity
Equality	Meaning	Variety
Excellence	Peace	Wisdom
Fairness	Personal growth	Worship

End Notes

1. Don Everts, *Jesus with Dirty Feet* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 25-28.
2. Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering your Private World* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2017).
3. Edward W. Desmond, "A Pencil in the Hand of God," *TIME Magazine*, December 4, 1989.

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Module 3
Session 2

**Developing a Mission
Statement**

SESSION 2

Developing a Mission Statement

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

It was one of those days. As I entered the church office on Sunday morning, I started shaking. I thought to myself, “I don’t know how long I can do this.” “Why am I doing this?” I was standing in front of our vintage message box that was filled with pink paper. Each slip told me that another volunteer could not make it to church that day. Six of my eight much needed preschool volunteers, who were teaching in four different classes, were absent. Despite the setbacks, we made it through the day (we always do!), but I felt like I was done. I kept asking myself, “Why am I doing this?” I knew that what I was doing was important, yet I couldn’t feel it. As I prayed that night, however, I began to realize I was not alone.

With God by our side, ministry is not primarily about accomplishing a task list. It is about what matters to God. I matter to Him. Children matter to Him. Parents matter to Him. My team matters to Him. The truth is that my team were very faithful and committed people. These days just happen. We all need to be reminded of why we do what we do and for whom. That night I resolved to start writing our ministry mission statement with our team. It took lots of time and reflection, but it was so worth it! This statement became the lens through which we saw our ministry. Everything we did, from program to teaching, had to fulfil our mission. It became the most powerful tool to recruit volunteers. It fuelled my team for service. It created an incredible enthusiasm from the congregation and the board to know more about what God was doing in our midst. If you have yet to write your mission statement, I encourage you to take the time to do so! It will bring you focus and a greater sense of purpose. This session will help you walk through the process of writing a mission statement for your children’s ministry.

Read

A mission statement is a set of inspiring words chosen to clearly and concisely convey the direction of life or ministry. By crafting a clear mission statement, Jesus powerfully communicated His intentions to the world. You can find it in Luke 4:18-19, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Just like us, Jesus had a pretty full life with loads of demands. Yet He knew what He was on Earth for. Knowing that kept Him focused through good and hard times, even on the cross.

Creating a Powerful Mission Statement

Unite and Pray

It is important to remember that God is the One who gives us the mission for our ministry. We

simply have the privilege of articulating it in a way that will reflect His heart for His ministry. As you pray and ask the Lord for His direction, consider these questions: What is God's dream for this ministry? What does He want to accomplish in the lives of these kids? Involve your team's key leaders in the process. Pray and fast together. Involving your team in the process will show each member that they are valued and will give them a strong sense of commitment to the task ahead.

Then write down words that reflect what God desires to do in your children's ministry.

Characteristics of a Good Mission Statement

The mission statement needs to be concise, specific, easy to understand, and easy to remember. If any third grader can learn it by heart, you are on track. A mission statement also needs to be founded on biblical principles. Jesus gave us very specific directions about what He expected from us as believers. They are found in the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Reflect with your team on how you can apply these verses to our ministry.

God is the One who gives us the mission for our ministry. We simply have the privilege of articulating it in a way that will reflect His heart for His ministry.

Love the Lord your God: How will your children experience the love of God? How will they learn to worship and to give Him first place in their lives?

Love your neighbour: How will you explain to your children who their neighbours are? How will you equip them to share their faith and serve those around them? How will they become agents of God's love and healing to their friends and family? How will they get involved in mission?

Go and make disciples: What is God's plan to reach the children of your community? What vehicle will you use to communicate the love of God to them in a powerful and relevant way?

Baptizing them: How will you help each child to develop a deeper relationship with God? What does the Holy Spirit want to do in their hearts? How will you teach and prepare them?

Teaching them to obey: What are your discipleship strategies? How will you help the children develop spiritual disciplines and mature in their faith and character?

There is no greater purpose than to train children in obeying and living by the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

Main Components

There are three main components to an effective mission statement:

- the action words (verbs)
- the cause
- a specific target

In Luke 4:18, Jesus chose three action words that defined what He was going to do: preach, proclaim, release.

The second component is the cause. This explains what you stand for. According to the passage, Jesus stands by the Spirit of the Lord for the good news, for freedom, for sight, and for the Lord's favour. What are you living for? What is God stirring in your heart?

The third element is the target. Who are you here to help? Jesus was clear on this. He was there for the poor, the prisoner, the blind and the oppressed. That's why He lived among them. Your target can be families, children, your community, or any target group you wish to focus on.

Ancient Roman philosopher Seneca said, "If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favourable."¹ Your mission statement will help you determine your destination. It will help you determine a direction for every single aspect of your ministry. It will be a clear, set standard by which you will be able to measure your growth and evaluate your ministry.

The Process

Understand that writing a mission statement usually doesn't happen overnight. You may start with a long list of words. Eliminate them one by one until you have no more than three for each component. Keep in mind, shorter and to the point is easier to remember and more effective. Many teams take weeks or months to create their mission statement. It is a long process, but so worth it! Make sure that the end result reflects the passion and vision of both the lead pastor and board for the church. After all, he or she is the leader of the church and, ultimately, the children's ministry and the church board are your accountability partners. Embrace the process playfully and prayerfully, and you will reap greater confidence and efficiency in your service as a team.

Reflect

Reflect on the mandate God gave us as His followers, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

These are the actions we need to take. The cause is simple. We do what we do in our lives for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus also gives us a target: all nations. It is an inclusive target. Every mission statement should conform to these divine instructions.

Take some time to reflect on what God is calling you to be. What does He want you to do? Is it your dream and desire to accomplish the Great Commission? If so, list five realistic ways you see that happening in the next year. How does the Great Commission relate to the Great Commandment to love God with all your heart and to love others as yourself?

Respond

Create a list of action words, values/causes, and target groups.

With a pencil, circle 10 words in each category that are appropriate for your life and ministry.

Then, reduce the list to five in each category. Take the time to pray. Select your top two or three in each category.

Write a mission statement for your ministry and one for yourself personally.

End Notes

1. Seneca (c. 4 BC - AD 65) was a Stoic philosopher of Ancient Rome.

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Module 3
Session 3

**Setting Goals and
Objectives**

SESSION 3

Setting Goals and Objectives

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

Ministers often have great dreams. As children's ministries leaders, we are filled with passion and the desire to make an eternal impact in the lives of children and their families. Even with the best of intentions, it is very easy to be distracted by all of the needs and demands that lie in front of us. So, where do you start? Let me suggest that setting God-given goals is the first step. These goals should suggest specific action steps that will help you accomplish them. This session is designed to help you set strategic goals that will truly fulfil your church's mission. Great goals point you in the right direction and provide you with a benchmark for measuring your progress.

To accomplish your goals, however, you need to know how to set them. You can't simply say, "I want to do this" and expect it to happen. Goal setting is a process that starts with careful consideration of what you want to achieve (your mission) and ends with a lot of hard work to actually do it. In between, there are some very well-defined steps that will help you set out the specifics of each goal and consider the achievability of your goals. Knowing these steps will allow you to formulate goals you can accomplish.

Read

There are five golden rules for goal setting:

Rule 1: Goals Must Always Serve the Mission

The big question is, "What do you need to do for the mission to be fulfilled?" The answer to this question will come through your goals. They should not be blind to church tradition but should always serve the mission statement. Are there any programs or projects you are doing presently that do not serve the mission? Maybe it is time for you to reconsider their value. Remember the mission. If what you are doing is irrelevant to the larger picture of your mission statement, then it's not worth your time and energy. Reflect on your mission, consult with your leadership team, and pray to God. He will show you where to go from there.

Rule 2: Set Goals in Writing

The physical act of writing down a goal makes it real and tangible. When a goal has been set in ink, you have no excuse for forgetting about it. As you write, use "will" instead of "would like to" or "might." For example, write "With God's help, we will reach the children of our community" instead of, "I would like to reach the kids of our community." The first statement sets a definite goal. The second lacks passion and gives you an out if you get sidetracked. Post your goals in visible places to remind yourself every day what you intend to do.

Rule 3: Make an Action Plan

This step is often missed in the process of goal setting. You can get so focused on the outcome that you forget to plan all of the steps needed along the way. By writing out the individual steps and crossing each one off as you complete it, you will be able to see your progress towards your ultimate goal. This is especially important if your goal is large, demanding, or long-term.

Rule 4: Stick with It

Remember, goal setting is an ongoing activity, not just a means to a single end. Build in reminders to keep you on track and remember to review your goals continuously. Your end destination may remain quite similar over the long term, but the action plan you set for yourself along the way can change significantly. Make sure the relevance, value, and necessity remain high.

Rule 5: Plan SMART Goals

Let's pretend I'm a pastor in a church that is vibrant, passionate, and has a vision for evangelism. I spend time in prayer and reflection on what we need to do as a children's ministry team to fulfil the vision. I decide to organize a back-to-school family event that will impact our community. Now that I have identified my goal, I need to set objectives. One of the strategies for effective planning I have found to be helpful in my ministry is the "SMART" acronym, which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely. There are also other forms of evaluation you can use as you set goals so that you are effective. Here's how this planning strategy breaks down:

Specific

A specific objective has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set specific objectives you need to answer these six questions:

What: What do you want to accomplish? Organize a back-to school carnival with the families of our community.

Who: Who is your target group? Families in our neighbourhoods, with many single parents and low-income households.

Who: Who is involved? I will oversee the project. I need four leaders to look after promotion, food, booths and hospitality. We will also need 25 volunteer workers.

Where: Choose a specific location. In the church gymnasium.

Which: Which requirements and constraints will I have to deal with? It will require a full live band, a stage, sound, and about 15 kid friendly booths.

Why: Why would this event/program serve the vision and help us meet our goal? I see a non-threatening and fun place where unbelievers and believers alike connect and develop relationships. As a fundraising event, it can also help to strengthen the resources for further ministry endeavours.

Measurable

Having measurable objectives helps you know when you have accomplished your goal. It helps you to establish concrete criteria and clear standards for measuring progress towards attaining each objective you set. When you measure your progress, you will stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the achievement which will motivate you to continue to reach your next set of objectives. As you plan the end outcome of your new initiative, resist the temptation to say, "I just want as many people as possible." Set a goal and work toward it. For example, ask the "How" questions:

How many: How many people/families do we want to reach? We expect to reach 250 people with this event.

How much: Because this is also a fundraiser, how much money do we want to raise? Looking at our budget and considering our anticipated expenses, how much can we expect to raise?

Achievable

Resist the two extremes of goal setting by avoiding overly easy and unachievable goals. Setting realistic yet challenging goals will give you the balance you need. These are the types of goals that require you to raise the bar and bring the greatest personal satisfaction. Is your objective achievable based on the financial, material, human resources and skills at your disposal? The following questions will help you discern if your project is attainable and appropriate.

- Do we have enough volunteers to pull off this event?
Yes, I will make a special appeal to the young adults of our congregation.
- Can we afford the expenses related to this event?
Not really at this point. We need to put a plan in place to find people who will sponsor this event.
- Do we have the material we need? If we need to rent, do we have the budget for it?
No, we will need to find sponsors and borrow materials.
- Is this goal achievable based on the knowledge and skills of our team?
Yes, with minimal volunteer training.
- What kind of promotion will we need?
Social media, flyers, posters, and personal invitations.

As you are asking yourself these questions, be honest and realistic. If you have answered no to one of these questions, take courage! This just means that you need to depend on God for creative ways to overcome these obstacles. Looking at this process, you need to be led by the Lord and be full of faith. You also need to realize that you are accountable to your leadership and to God about how you manage the skills and resources that are at your disposal. In all things, keep in close contact with your lead team and listen to the Holy Spirit. He will give you wisdom and show you if you need to scale down a bit or refocus your attention on another area. Objectives are meant to be stretching and will motivate you to go beyond yourself to achieve and receive all that God wants for your life and ministry.

Relevant

Goals should be relevant and in agreement with the church's mission. By keeping goals aligned with the mission, you will develop the focus you need to get ahead. When setting your goals, ask these questions.

- Which need does this event/program meet?
This event will provide safe family fun and will be free of charge. It will meet the people's need for entertainment and community.
- How is this event/program fulfilling the vision?
We will focus on building relationships with the unbeliever; this is the first step to sharing Christ.
- Is this the best way to reach our target group? Does this approach reflect your ministry values?
This event will create community in a fun and safe atmosphere.

Objectives are meant to be stretching and will motivate you to go beyond yourself to achieve and receive all that God wants for your life and ministry.

Timely

This is all about delivery. It is the "When" question. You need to ensure that your goals can be delivered in a timely fashion and are trackable or time-bound. You must ask yourself the question, "When do you want to achieve your goal?" You need to set a completion date for the task/event/project and ensure that you have sufficient time to complete your goal. Ask yourself two questions:

- When will this event/program take place? Choose a specific date. *The event will be the last Saturday in the month of August.*
- How long will this event be? *From 1-5 p.m.*

You can use the SMART approach for all your long-term goals, even those that relate to the spiritual growth of children. Ask yourself: "What does God want to do in the lives of the children? What principles do you want the kids to internalize and live out?" If you struggle to be more specific in your objectives, then you need to focus more on action-oriented planning. Unless you make changes, nothing is going to change, so focus on what God is telling you to do and move from there.

Reflect

Reflect on your church's vision statement and values. What sorts of things could you be doing to fulfil them?

Pray that God would show you what you need to do for the vision to be fulfilled. Write down the different goals you have on your heart (what do you need to do to fulfil the vision?). Then, set SMART goals. They must be clear and well-defined. Vague or generalized goals are not achievable because they don't provide sufficient direction. Ideally, you would do this with your team. Ask yourselves the following questions and write down your answers.

Specific

- What do you want to accomplish?
- Who is your target group?
- Who is involved?
- Where will the event be held? Choose a specific location.
- Which requirements and constraints will I have to deal with?
- Why would this event/program serve the vision and help us meet our goal?

Measurable

- How many people/families do we want to reach?
- If it's a fundraiser, how much money do we want to raise?

Achievable

- Do we have enough volunteers to pull off this event?
- Can we afford the expenses related to this event?
- Do we have the materials we need? If we need to rent, do we have the budget for it?
- Is this goal achievable based on the knowledge and skills of our team?
- What kind of marketing will we need?

Relevant

- Which need does this event/program meet?
- How does this event/program fulfil this vision?
- Is this the best way to reach our target group?
- Does this approach reflect our ministry values?

Timely

- When will this event/program take place? Choose a specific date.
- How long is this event going to be?

Respond

If your church has a mission statement and core values, write them out and read them over.

If your church does not have one or the other, use the mission statement you created earlier in this module.

Go through each of the steps outlined in this study and write down three different goals that would help to fulfil your church's mission statement. Choose one of those goals and answer all of the questions set out in the SMART planning guide. Once you have set your goal and outlined all of the steps that you need to complete it, submit it to your lead pastor for review and consideration. If the church leadership feels it is a goal worthy of following through on, move through the planning stages toward the fulfilment of your mission.

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Module 3
Session 4

**Being the Best You Can
Be in Life and Ministry**

SESSION 4

Being the Best You Can Be in Life and Ministry

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

Have you ever felt that you're running out of time? You may feel that you don't have the time to do the laundry, to attend parent/teacher meetings, to visit the kids in your ministry, or to take a vacation. Time is flying by and our to-do lists remain the same. Stop for a minute and think about this. Each year, God gives us a gift of 365 days. Each day is filled with 24 hours—1440 minutes, to be more precise. In His great wisdom, God thought this would be enough time for us to do everything He asks us to do, including moments for delighting in Him and in our loved ones. The question is not whether or not we have enough time. Rather, we should ask, "Am I being wise and intentional in the way I steward my time and energy? Am I spreading myself too thin in things that have the least impact and reward?"

The truth is that God gave you the gift of enough time for all the things He asks you to do. Are you doing what He's asking you to do? This session will equip you to become a better steward of your time and energy by giving you tools to plan a healthy calendar, do strategic assessment through the SWOT analysis system, and by delegating wisely. Remember: God gives you ALL you need, including time, energy, and creativity, so let's make the best of it!

Read

Plan a Healthy Year Calendar

1. Book Family and Personal Refreshment Time First

The first thing that should go in your yearly calendar is family and personal refreshment time. Choose a bright colour to highlight your personal plans in your digital or physical calendar. Make sure you can clearly distinguish your plans with family and friends from your work plans. Mark dates such as anniversaries, birthdays, vacations, graduations, kids' sport tournaments and recitals, and time with extended family. Unless you set these times apart for the ones you love, you will end up neglecting those who matter the most to you. The reality for me personally is that my husband and I don't go out on Valentine's Day right now because it is just too hard to find a babysitter. Now, before you think badly of me, let me tell you how we plan. We put a date night on the calendar that is two or three days after Valentine's Day. We have no problem getting a babysitter, the restaurants are always emptier and prices on roses are definitely cheaper too! Valentine's Day celebrations become stress free! Plan well according to what works best for you and your family.

Unless you set time apart for the ones you love, you will end up neglecting those who matter the most to you.

2. Put Important Work-Related Dates on Your Calendar

In a different colour, mark the dates that relate to work, to the church, to your ministry, and to the community. Is there a time when your work is filled with deadlines and is more demanding on you and your family? Put it on your calendar. Are there church events such as camp, a picnic, or an outreach that you need to attend or work on? Put it in your calendar. What about regular events in the children's ministry department like camp, September kickoff, and Christmas productions? Put them on your calendar. Make sure that the key Canadian annual statutory holiday times—such as Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years and other important days to your community—are marked clearly. Sometimes when you are busy, it's easy to double-book something and not even realize it as a day to set aside to honour and remember.

One thing that is very helpful is to mark down important dates for your community such as spring break, long weekends, city festivals, and maybe even a community or neighbourhood barbecue. As a pastor in Victoria, BC, one of the highlights of my year was the Victoria Day Parade, one of the biggest parades in Canada. It was such a fabulous opportunity to get our kids on our dynamic and well-decorated float to promote our upcoming camp in the city parade. What exposure and a great opportunity to connect with those outside the church! Choose a colour and highlight dates of events in which you need to be involved. Choose another colour to mark dates of events that will play a role in your event planning. When you don't schedule planning times, you could be in trouble, and the success of the event could be jeopardized.

3. Look at Your Calendar

Look at your calendar as a whole. Consider family and personal life, work, church as a whole, and your personal ministry. Then, think about the goals and projects God is putting on your heart. Reflect on the amount of time you will need to prepare, promote, gather material, recruit volunteers, etc. Then, pray about when these goals, projects, or events would be the timeliest in your life as a whole. Remember, the goal through this complete calendar reflection is to assure your longevity and fruitfulness in ministry throughout the entire year, and for years to come. Sometimes the healthiest thing you can do is to wait for the right time. In this part of the exercise, realize that God's timing is best. Pray about the things you are putting on your calendar. Sense the Spirit's leading as to whether you should go ahead with certain plans, wait, or even dismiss them entirely. As we walk with the Lord on a daily basis, we become aware of His leading, how He speaks to our hearts, and even how He arranges our calendars.

Once you have the major events or projects on your calendar, think about what platforms or opportunities you can use to promote your events and ministry. I have used our involvement in the city parade to promote the church's upcoming VBS with great success. What opportunities within your church and community can you use to help spread the word about a new initiative? Oftentimes, we can use one successful event to highlight the next event coming. For example, at your Easter Eggstravaganza, you can highlight your upcoming Summer Day Camps!

The SWOT Analysis: A Strategic Planning Method

1. Strength and Weakness

Here is where you can list all your potentially positive internal factors. The questions below will help you identify these points. It is called internal because it depends on the actual ministry reality. When developing strengths and weaknesses, it is important to look at the church/ministry honestly, rather than being too modest or overly critical. Seek a balance between the number of strengths and weaknesses identified. While identifying your strengths, ask yourself these questions:

- What are you doing well?
- Which areas of church/ministry are healthy?
- What would someone who sees several churches like ours point out as being distinctive (either positive or negative) about our church?
- Which resources can we call upon? How do these compare to our needs?
- Which factors could reduce our effectiveness?

2. Opportunities and Threats

The opportunities and threats are called external factors because they are mainly gathered from looking beyond the boundaries of the church/ministry. To identify opportunities, reflect on the community-based needs that could be met by your church's strengths and resources.

To identify the threats, reflect on things which are out of your control and could affect your event/program, like the weather or conflicting dates, for example. Also reflect on what is changing in the community or in society that will impact you in the future. You need to be aware of these things. One of the best ways to run a smooth event or to make a considerable transition in your ministry is to identify potential problems before they happen, and to find creative solutions that can resolve any issue.

3. Think Creatively

The aim of the SWOT analysis is to identify the key factors that will impact the church's ability to achieve its purpose and vision. For the sake of focus, it is probably best to limit the SWOT analysis to no more than 10 factors for each of the four elements.

As you make your SWOT analysis, be sure to assign action points for each factor in the various categories. Use action words to help you set clear guidelines. The goal is to help you:

- Build your Strengths
- Reverse (or disguise) your Weakness
- Maximize the response to Opportunities
- Overcome Threats

Delegate Wisely

1. What Do You Love to Do?

Think about the things that fuel your life and ministry. Plan to do some of the things you are most passionate about.

2. What Are You Not Good At?

None of us can do everything well. The quicker you understand this, the better it will be for you and everyone else. Recognize your limits. Plan accordingly.

3. What Do You Need to Do?

Some things are yours to do, like it or not. You just can't get around it. This may be communicating your vision for the ministry, planning the budget, recruiting volunteers, implementing policies or dealing with conflict. Remember that to have the credibility of your team and senior leadership, you must take responsibility for what is yours to do. I recommend that you clarify the non-negotiables of your position with your lead pastor or the church leaders to whom you are accountable. Allow them to clearly communicate their expectations of your role or involvement. If you need to do something you are not good at, find a mentor who can coach you in this area. Seeking advice or guidance is not a weakness—when done well, it becomes a strength.

4. What Can You Delegate? Who Would Love This Ministry?

There is no place in God's kingdom for control freaks. You need to let go of some things and delegate them wisely. However, you must resist the tendency to simply dump tasks on people. Has anyone ever dumped a task on you before? Have you ever dumped a project on someone? God is calling us to be leaders who wisely delegate, communicating what needs to be done and empowering someone else to take charge.

One way you can delegate wisely is to ask yourself, "What will that person need in order to do a great job?" You see, the difference between dumping and delegating is in the empowerment. When you ask someone to join the team and fulfil a specific role or do a specific task, you need to give them the tools so that they will be empowered and can succeed. This means providing a clear job description and offering some training, equipping, or coaching.

Reflect

Look at your calendar. How healthy is it? Have you planned vacation, family, and rest time? Have you taken adequate time for these important things? If not, why not? Have you begun planning and blocking out the important things on next year's calendar? If you have not, there is no better time than the present.

Reflect on your ministry. What are you passionate about? What do you love to do? What are a few things that you feel could be done better by someone else? Is there something you absolutely do not look forward to having to do?

Reflect on a time when someone dumped a task on you. How did you feel? Do you tend to dump tasks on others? Can you think of a job that you delegated to someone else with clarity and support that empowered them to complete the task? If not, why not?

In your ministry and in your personal life, a lack of clarity leads to confusion. Reflect on different aspects where you need to clarify expectations. For example, you might think you need to provide or lead a children's choir at Easter or Christmas, but it might not be a priority for your lead pastor or leadership team. Knowing this will help you to prioritize your time and energy.

Respond

Look at your calendar. Mark all important dates from the categories covered in this session. Mark each category with a different colour of highlighter or marker. Then, highlight the dates of events in which you need to be involved. Choose another colour to highlight the dates of the events that will play a role in your event planning (church or community events at large).

Make a SWOT analysis for one of your goals covering the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. For each factor, match an action point and identify who should be responsible for the task.

Make a list of the things you enjoy doing the most in your ministry.

Make a list of what you need to do. You might need to clarify your role with your pastor or leadership, asking them what the non-negotiables are as they line up with the vision and mission of your church. Some of these questions may help to direct you:

- When do I need to be working from the church office (if you are in a staff, intern, or paid volunteer position)?
- What are the three most important things that should require my attention? What are the non-negotiable "must do's"?
- Which programs need to be offered in my church setting? What is the purpose and target group of each program?
- What other committees, programs, or events should I participate in?
- Are there things in which I am presently involved that may be taking time I could be putting in something more important? How can I transfer my responsibilities to someone else well? Who should that person be?
- What is my involvement in the life of the church and our congregation?
- Are there new initiatives I should consider? When should I plan for them?

Make a list of the things you should delegate to others. List the resources that other volunteers would need to do that ministry well. What should you do to help with the transition, equipping, and empowering them to do the job well?

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Module 4
Building
Your Team



Module 4
Session 1

Recruiting With Vision

SESSION 1

Recruiting With Vision

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

It was the end of May and, as I was vacationing with my family, I visited a church. During the announcements the associate pastor stood in front of the congregation and, with a dead serious look on his face, said: "Listen up, folks. I'm so sorry to come to you with this again, but it's now summer and we need your help with Sunday school. We know that nobody wants to do it and it can be a pain, but if we each take a turn we will get through the summer." I was flabbergasted! Even I would not have been interested in helping! The truth is that recruiting volunteers is not an easy task. In fact, it can be the number one struggle that children's pastors are often facing. This session is designed to help you inspire others to join your team and realize how your approach to children's ministry can positively or negatively impact your ability to recruit volunteers.

Read

Your Ministry Image

Principle 1: People are Impacted by What They Experience

What do the people in your congregation see and hear about the ministry? Madison Avenue advertisers tell us: "You have three seconds to make an impression; the mind retains an image 200 times longer than it retains a word."¹ Your children's ministry facility is speaking. Does it speak boredom or excitement? During my time as a children's pastor in Victoria, British Columbia, I made the choice to improve our preschool ministry facility into a "Bug's World," and this was one of the best things I did to recruit volunteers. It used to be a place where junk was stored. We made it our mandate to make the children's ministry attractive for the entire family. The two-year-olds' classroom became an anthill. It was filled with murals of joyful little ants. The three-year-olds' classroom was turned into a beehive. The walls were covered with bees carrying godly attributes such as "Bee KIND," "Bee LOVING," and "Bee CARING." The four-year-olds' room was transformed into a butterfly garden and included a theatre area for story time.

These very cost-effective changes transformed our preschool ministry. On the day we unveiled the new artwork, we invited families for a light lunch. The room was decorated with loads of balloons, and cool music filled the air. We had a bulletin board filled with pictures of our leaders when they were preschoolers. The kids were thrilled to see what their teachers looked like at their age. That day we also unveiled our "Glow Kids" preschool logo—a bright and cute glowworm. Leaders explained the exciting things their students would learn and do that year. It was a great day. Once again I was reminded that people are impacted by what they sense and experience.

Some of you might be in a situation where you are renting a building or are in a multipurpose room and can't decorate. I encourage you to be creative! Order inexpensive backdrops or shower curtains online. A scene on a removable backdrop can transform your space into anything you want it to be! Entice your congregation's interest by creating an inspirational promo video that will give your church an inside look at the heart of your children's ministry. Create a logo for your ministry. Have retractable banners that display your children's ministry logo and mission statement as soon as they walk through the door. Post directional signs or more banners that indicate each classroom's location especially in a rented space.

Principle 2: Always Recruit to a Vision, Not to a Need

I have spent countless hours looking at student-to-volunteer ratios for each age group, trying to figure out how many volunteers I needed for each classroom. I found myself pleading with people, trying to convince them of the NEED in our children's ministry. It made me feel frustrated and lonely. I felt the weight of the entire children's ministry on my shoulders. While we need to be aware of these things and apply an abuse prevention policy, I realized that, on the recruiting side, I needed to do things differently. I asked myself, "Why would I want to be a part of this ministry?" From that day forward, my speech changed. I started to talk about our mission statement, explaining why we existed. Then I

passionately shared a picture of what I saw for our children's ministry. What would it look like when our children had their lives changed by a personal encounter with Jesus and by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit? Sharing our vision ignited an interest and inspired people to be a part of something greater than themselves. Instead of saying, "We need help!" I would say, "There is a place for you." People want to be a part of something that is thriving. Help them see the vision.

Sharing our vision ignited an interest and inspired people to be a part of something greater than themselves.

Principle 3: Communicate Clearly With Your Congregation

Maybe you have never had an opportunity to share your passion for children's ministry with your congregation. Well, your time has come. Ask your lead pastor for 10 minutes of platform time every quarter so you can communicate your vision and inspire people to join your team.

Never apologize for the time you are taking during the service. Children's ministry is an integral part of our worship to God as a congregation. Be sure you are prepared; your pastor may be hesitant to give you more time in the future if you are not well-prepared. Share about the reality of what children today are going through—things they are facing every day. Then explain how your purpose as a children's ministry offers a solution for these challenges. For example, kids face all kinds of temptation from a very young age. Our goal is to equip their hearts with godly principles to help them make good choices. Have a child join you on the platform to share how her small group leader prayed with her for a problem she was having or simply have her share what she loves about church. Have a volunteer talk about how his ministry impacted his personal growth. You might want to make a video 116

talk about how his ministry impacted his personal growth. You might want to make a video in advance and show it to the congregation. Talk about the numerous benefits of serving in children's ministry and the difference a person can make in the life of a child. Share your excitement about the people on your team. Refuse to get into the guilt trip trap because it communicates desperation. It will make your ministry expire. Instead, inspire people to join the team. When you speak, respect the time frame allowed by your lead pastor. Most important, remember that the Holy Spirit is with you—He will speak to the hearts of the people.

Principle 4: Don't Make it Easy; Make it Rewarding.

Years ago, family life revolved around church. As a family, we attended church three or four times a week. Things have changed. Between work and extracurricular activities, time seems to be shrinking. Wanting to adjust to this new rhythm, many children's ministries have designed their structure around "show up" volunteer positions. No preparation is required; just show up if you are breathing. This doesn't work. One children's ministry leader I spoke to said, "I make it so easy for the volunteer. They just have to show up. Even then, I have such a hard time finding volunteers."

The truth is, the less involved people are the less committed they are. At one point in my ministry, our children's ministry had 150 volunteers. Our preschool volunteers were only required to help one week out of every six. We had lots of volunteers, but people served so sporadically that they ended up forgetting about their turn. I realized that making it easier is not necessarily better. Instead of having 45 sporadic volunteers in the preschool area, it was better to have 18 committed ones. I valued our ministry to children so much that I elevated my standard accordingly, especially for our teachers. This smaller group of committed people became like shepherds tending to their flock every week. The teachers knew the kids' names, birthdays and family members' names. They were able to pray with the children and follow up with them. It suddenly became rewarding because they knew they were making an impact.

Principle 5: Offer a Test Drive.

Plan a Sunday where potential volunteers can come and visit the classrooms or different areas of your ministry. Give them a tour of the facility. Have them observe a well-run classroom. Answer their questions. Give them a taste of your ministry culture. Explain to them what kind of training they would receive and deliver what you promise. Doing that three or four times a year will make your ministry accessible to new volunteers and will keep it exciting for your regular crew.

Your Ministry Culture

Your ministry's culture is what makes observers want to know more about what you are doing. There are many habits that can contribute positively to your team and affect greatly how potential volunteers perceive you. Here are three that I find are the most forgotten ones.

Principle 1: Care For Your Volunteers as Whole Beings

During meetings or training events, provide childcare for your volunteers' children. Provide food at these events. It is always noticed and appreciated. Send a handwritten note or card for their birthdays and anniversaries. When they make mistakes, be gracious towards them. Cover them with love and prayer. Be sensitive to their individual needs. Some might be burned out and need a few weeks off to recharge. Let them know that their emotional, physical and spiritual health is more important to you than the ministry position they carry out. Respect their limitations and help them put boundaries around their lives. This is what friends do.

Principle 2: Create New Opportunities

There are two ways to recruit volunteers. Traditionally, we organize programs and place people in the needed positions. This is part of ministry. The other way challenges us to think outside the box. You focus on each individual's different talents, skills and competencies. This might not seem to fit in a traditional format. In such cases, you need to make room and create new opportunities. For our VBS "Glow Day Camp," we decided to provide elective activities. When recruiting our leaders, we simply said, "Whatever skill or expertise you would like to share with the children, come and we'll talk." Many gifted people joined our team that day. There was a hip-hop and drama teacher, a scrapbooking instructor, and a professional painter who taught kids art. There was a team of woodworkers who taught the kids to make amazing pirate ships. In one session I was teaching on the Good Samaritan, and we showed the kids a hilarious skit about the Pirates of the CARE-A-BEING. We used the kids' boats as an object lesson that day. One of the men enjoyed his experience so much that he later taught a weekly class. One lady came with the generous idea of creating outfits for kids' Build-A-Bear stuffed animals. When recruiting volunteers, think outside the box.

As part of our yearly evaluation, I asked each volunteer, "Do you have a talent or skill that is not being used in your current ministry position?" Someone with good math skills could initiate an after-school tutoring program. Let people step up and embrace their different gifts and abilities. You will be surprised. We can place people into positions and roles. We can also create positions and roles around the gifts and calling of the people. Ask this question often: "What is God telling you?" Some of the most innovative ministries come from answering that very question.

Principle 3: Give Your Volunteers a Voice

One of the best things you can learn as a leader is to read people—especially the signs of frustration and discouragement. Children's ministry comes with loads of joy and challenges alike. It will never be perfect, but we must strive to serve God wholeheartedly and efficiently. Invite your team to share their concerns with you. When a volunteer comes up to you and shares a frustration or a problem, ask them: "what do you think we should do?" People are often shocked by this because they really came to you to fix the situation. Through years of ministry I have realized that when volunteers come with a complaint, they most often have an idea about how to solve it. Ask for their input and listen attentively. It's all about challenging our team to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. The goal

is to create a culture where volunteers have a sense of ownership with the ministry. This will come to fruition because they have a voice and what they say matters.

One of my leaders came to me discouraged and began to tell me that when the main service happened to end earlier than usual, parents would pick up their kids in the last 10 to 15 minutes of her class. She really felt this situation was preventing her from doing a good job with the kids. When I asked her what we could do about this, she answered, "We could have a sign on the door with the classroom routine and the time allotted for each activity.

Another sign could say that parents are welcome to chat in the hall for a few minutes while they wait, and that their children will be dismissed at 12 p.m. sharp." So we did. Sometimes we provided cookies for the parents who were waiting for their kids. Parents understood and were touched by how our teachers really cared and took seriously the ministry to their children. It just so happened that many other volunteers were frustrated by the same situation and were very glad we made the change. I reminded them that this is what happens when we decide to be a part of the solution.

Reflect

Reflect on a time when you felt inspired to serve a cause. What compelled you to serve? Did you find the experience rewarding? Jesus had His own way of recruiting disciples. Read Mark 1:16-17 and reflect on His recruiting style. What was so great about Jesus' invitation to serve?

Respond

Prepare a five-to seven-minute volunteer recruitment presentation featuring your children's ministry's mission, values and ministry opportunities. Include an inspiring story of how your ministry has impacted your life, the life of a child or that of a volunteer. Ask your lead pastor if it could be shared in a service—not as a project, but as a sincere and inspiring opportunity to recruit. Above all else, pray Jesus' words everyday from Luke 10:2; "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

End Notes

1. Steve Alley, *Growing a Healthy Children's Ministry* (Cincinnati: Standard, 2002), 169.

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Module 4
Session 2

**Interviewing and
Placing Volunteers**

SESSION 2

Interviewing and Placing Volunteers

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

You have cast the net and now the volunteers are coming on board. You are eager to get them started, but don't let this excitement distract you from your duty as a leader. You are accountable to your pastor, the board, the parents, the children, and ultimately to God to make sure that each volunteer serving in your ministry is trustworthy, trained and safe. You are also accountable to your volunteers. It is your responsibility to place them in a position that fits with their callings and gifts. This session will help you understand best practices when welcoming a new volunteer.

Once individuals show interest in a position and become familiar with a job description, you will need to walk them through five steps. These are: the application, the criminal record check, interview preparation, the interview and placement. This session has been condensed, so please refer to your church's abuse prevention policy and the detailed steps of vetting volunteers. If you have any questions about the five steps, reach out to your District Children's and Family Ministry Specialist.

Read

Preparation: Create Clear Job Descriptions

A clear job description is essential for recruiting great volunteers. It is like a map and compass for potential partners as they sail toward ministry. It is also the tool you will use to evaluate a candidate's suitability for any given position. In addition, it is a great reminder of your responsibility to your ministry team. A well-defined job description specifies the goal of the position and its requirements. Here is a brief list of guidelines you should consider when putting together a job description:

The Job Title

This must be short and specific (e.g., *Small group leader for six-year-old boys*).

The Goal

Explain what you desire to accomplish through this position (e.g., *Helping kids to develop a deeper relationship with God*).

The Task List

This is a brief description of the tasks involved (e.g., *Lead children in prayer and discussion etc.*).

The Requirements

List the skills, attitudes and knowledge desired. Record the required amount of preparation time and setup/tear down time at the church. Set an average number of hours per week or month that will be required for personal preparation.

The Expectations

Let potential candidates know about team meetings, training events, and church services they will be expected to attend.

Accountability

Clarify the reporting structure. Candidates should understand who they'll be reporting to, and you should introduce them to their potential supervisors before making a final decision.

The Time Frame

Clarify the estimated number of hours needed to do the job with excellence, the length of commitment, and the specific times and days of their ministry.

Training Details

This is your commitment to them. Describe the short-term and mid-term plans you have for their training and development.

Preparing job descriptions for as many positions as possible will greatly simplify your recruiting process. You can find all kinds of templates online you can customize or contact your District Children's and Family Ministry Specialist for their recommendations.

Step 1: Application

An effective application form is a three-part document. The first part should be filled out by the applicant for your benefit. The second part of the application form should include the job description and is for the applicant's benefit. The third part should detail your church's ministry covenant, a special agreement between a volunteer and the church. It's a promise to serve God and the community while following the church's rules, such as those regarding child safety policies.

Your application form should detail what the candidate needs to know. Provide a link to your children's ministry mission statement and values, the church's statement of belief, and the PAOC's Statement of Essential Truths. Confused people will confuse children. Be cautious when going through doctrinal statements during the interview. Providing an opportunity for your candidates to ask questions about what your church believes will greatly help you in evaluating their theological strengths or weaknesses. If they are weak, it is wise to place them with a seasoned leader.

Your application form should detail what the candidate needs to do. Include volunteer requirements such as attending team meetings, training events, and regular services. Include what is required of all your volunteers. Specifics can be added onto each individual job description. You should also include information on how you deal with conflict and the need to act honourably toward other team members. Include your ministry covenant. Volunteers must have joined the congregation six months prior to volunteering, and they must have an interview. The interview should be conducted by you and one other church leader who is knowledgeable about the ministry's mission, the specific volunteer role, and most importantly, the church's child protection policies.

The final section should detail what volunteers need to be. What are the things you expect from your team? For example, every volunteer needs to be growing in Christian character and have a consistent prayer life. Each volunteer should show evidence that they are bearing spiritual fruit and are living righteous lives, always seeking to be Christlike. They should be teachable, committed to the vision of the church, loyal to the leadership, and value children. It is very important that you explain all these elements during the interview. These are the non-negotiables of leadership.

The first part of the application will help you with your interview. You should ask for personal information, contact information, a brief explanation of their salvation story and understanding of their place in ministry, references, past experience in ministry, skills and areas of gifting, interests and availability. You might also consider having candidates sign and return copies of your church's belief statements.

Step 2: Criminal Record Check

It is your church's responsibility to screen volunteers who serve in children's ministry in your province or territory to protect kids and leaders and meet legal and insurance requirements. This includes a criminal record check, which looks for any history of offenses that could make someone unsuitable to work with children. Following your insurance policy's guidelines is essential—failure to do so could result in denied coverage if an incident occurs. Proper screening helps keep everyone safe and protects your ministry. Find out who is in charge of your abuse prevention and child protection policy at your church and follow the best practices according to the church's policy.

Step 3: Interview Preparation

A great way to get to know your potential volunteer is through his/her references. They will help you to understand how your candidate is perceived by employers, friends and family. Ask questions such as:

- How long have you known the applicant?
- What was the context of your relationship?
- What is the greatest strength/weakness of the applicant?
- Describe his/her ability to interact with others, to follow through on commitments, and his/her level of maturity?
- How would you describe the applicants patience and temperament when working with a large group of young children?
- Would you recommend the applicant to a volunteer position with children? Why?

Make sure to ask open questions. Feel free to ask the interviewee to elaborate on their point of view. Keep questions short and concise. After you have processed your candidate's application forms, records, and references, set up an appointment to meet face-to-face for an interview.

Step 4: The Interview

In preparation, read through the application form one more time. Prepare specific questions with the help of the application form, job description and references. Keep in mind that one of the goals of this interview is to watch for inconsistencies or red flags. Pay close attention to those applicants who are recent attendees or newcomers.

Start by asking the interviewee to describe their personal faith journey and history. Compare what they share with the information on their application and references. You should also ask them why they are interested in serving in the specific role they applied for and ask questions about their beliefs. It is very important that your ministry leaders are committed followers of Jesus who have a growing relationship with Him that is grounded in obedience to scripture. They should also be students of God's Word who can communicate it with confidence.

When interviewing a potential volunteer, review your abuse prevention policies, the church's statement of belief, and your ministry covenant with them. Make sure the candidate fully understands these documents. Ask them directly about their commitment, such as, "Are you willing to attend the required training and team meetings?" and "Will you commit to living by our ministry covenant?" If they can't agree to these terms, they may be better suited for a different ministry area. During the interview, pay attention to their passions, abilities, and interests. These insights can help you find the perfect role for them.

Finally, remember to take detailed, dated, and signed notes during each interview. Keep a confidential file for each volunteer, either in a locked cabinet for a hard copy or a secure digital profile. This is crucial for record-keeping and volunteer management.

Step 5: Placement

When placing a volunteer, always keep in mind that your role is to help these individuals to be equipped and released in the ministry that God has prepared for them. Resist the tendency to use them to fill the holes in your schedule or the most urgent need. If someone has a passion for preteens, don't put them in the nursery because there is a need. You can offer a supervised test drive if your candidates are unsure of their gifting, but let them serve where they have passion. Appropriate placement in ministry is one of the best reasons why people continue to volunteer year after year. Consider their past experience, interests and gifting, and place them where these qualities would be maximized for God's kingdom. It is a beautiful sight to see a volunteer thriving in their place of ministry.

When placing a volunteer, always keep in mind that your role is to help these individuals to be equipped and released in the ministry that God has prepared for them.

Reflect

Consider the steps outlined in this session for volunteer interviewing and placement. Use the following questions to reflect on what you are doing well and what needs attention on your part:

Have you ever served in a ministry where there were unclear expectations? How did that prevent you from serving freely and effectively?

Have you ever felt that you've been placed in a position of ministry just to fill a spot? How did that make you feel?

Think of what you are looking for in a volunteer and a leader. Look for:

- **Character:** love, maturity, wisdom, a teachable spirit, servant-hood.
- **Competency:** leadership, communication, conflict resolution.
- **Commitment:** the desire to carry out their passion for children over the long haul.
- **Chemistry:** the ability to work with other leaders as a team.

Understand that many volunteers (including you) will need to be challenged in these areas. This will help you to be intentional in creating a successful ministry environment.

Respond

Create job descriptions for your volunteers, starting with the team leader (e.g., nursery coordinator) in each department or age group. Even if you are not a children's pastor or director, this is a very valuable exercise that can only help to strengthen you and stretch your own leadership abilities for future opportunities. Reach out to a seasoned children's ministry leader or your District Children's and Family Ministry Specialist for a sample of job descriptions.

Establish a simple and effective structure to manage your criminal record check updates on each individual. This can be manually with hard copy files or digitally through a church management software. This plan should allow you to keep track of when an individual is due for a recheck according to your church's insurance carrier. Don't forget to keep your personal criminal records check up-to date as well. Make sure you have the administrative structure to keep hard copy or digital files permanently.

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Module 4
Session 3

**Training and Coaching
Volunteers**

SESSION 3

Training and Coaching Volunteers

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

I love watching musicians on stage. Just a few minutes into the concert, you know whether or not they have learned to master their instrument. The most skilled artists perform with greater freedom and often a better capacity to engage with their audience. Beautiful melodies tell the story of long hours of practice and years of experience. Our service to God is no different. There is something about knowing what to do and how it should be done. It brings clarity and freedom for those who serve. As leaders, we must be confident in the area of delegation. It is important that we not do everything on our own, but work as Jesus did to develop a team. Training is key! Your goal as a children's leader is to consistently be building a team, especially if you desire growth in your church and area of ministry.

The leader of an orchestra not only directs but finds himself to be the coach at the front of the group, drawing out the skills of others to create the perfect mix and blend of sounds. Although accomplished musicians come to the stage with much knowledge from years of study, there are still things they can learn as they work in harmony with others. They are not playing solo anymore. They are part of a team and must function in that manner. As you seek to train others who will join your ministry team, you must impart knowledge through your teaching and demonstrate skills through your ability to coach. These are the two elements we will be looking at in this session; they can help you gain greater success and manage the growth you desire in your ministry.

Read

Training

There are three levels of volunteers in your ministry, and each of them requires different kinds of training. There are the seasonal volunteers, the faithful volunteers and the leader volunteers. All of them play an essential part on your children's ministry team. In this session we will look at each type of volunteer and learn practical ways in which each needs to be trained and coached.

The Seasonal Volunteer

These are the "fill in" or "once in a while" volunteers. We all have them and need them. They are an integral part of your ministry and will most often serve during special events or once every four to six weeks in a classroom. Because of their sporadic involvement, they usually have a low level of commitment. These volunteers always need to be placed in positions where they will succeed. They must receive basic volunteer training. You should also give them simple and precise instructions for the tasks they need to accomplish that day. Encourage them constantly. Let them know that their contribution to the ministry is important and does not go unnoticed. It is ideal to pair them up with someone of greater

experience so they can glean from the other person. The more you encourage and support their efforts, the more confident they will become. In offering them opportunities to serve more regularly, you may see a stronger commitment over time. For the seasonal volunteer, it is often a matter of their really feeling that their contribution matters, and that what they offer is of value to the rest of the team. For others, it may simply be that their calendar only allows for this level of commitment; we must be okay with that and appreciate their involvement nonetheless.

The Faithful Volunteer

These are the volunteers who make Sunday mornings or midweek programs happen. They are committed to the vision and consider themselves an integral part of the ministry. They will typically not initiate any changes or demonstrate leadership in a stressful situation. They see themselves as shepherds of the children. That is their flock, and they carry a strong level of responsibility for spiritually nurturing those God has placed in their care during that ministry time. It is important that this type of volunteer know and understand well the age level characteristics of the group they are instructing, and how to communicate effectively the basics of Christian living in a way that this age group learns best. All the components of their lesson plans must be age appropriate.

The faithful volunteer will have greater success in the classroom when they are familiar with the various learning styles of people, how they can minister effectively to children with special needs, how they can assist children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and also the process by which they can lead a child to Christ.

Faithful volunteers must be trained in the elements of the curriculum and how to create and work in successful classroom environments. It is important that you thoroughly walk them through the content they are using so they know how it should be used for utmost effectiveness. Just because everything is laid out in a curriculum doesn't always mean that a new or inexperienced teacher knows best the sequence of how a lesson should be taught. Take time to go over lesson planning strategies and how to incorporate various resources and teaching strategies to make the curriculum even more effective. Reading words from a page to students just doesn't make for an effective class, and chances are you won't see life transformation when a leader's heart and soul are not put into the lesson being taught. Faithful leaders need to know that the curriculum is only a guide, and that the Holy Spirit is their ultimate guide. They must listen closely to what He is prompting them to pass on to the next generation through their teaching. Train your workers in creating a comfortable routine in the classroom so that matters of discipline and classroom management can flow without difficulty or disruption.

Just because a volunteer is faithful doesn't necessarily mean they are the greatest communicator. Yet everyone can improve their skills when given opportunity and positive coaching. Train leaders in communication basics. Just because you may know it is never best for children to be facing a window as you tell a story (because of distractions) doesn't

Faithful leaders need to know that the curriculum is only a guide, and that the Holy Spirit is their ultimate guide. They must listen closely to what He is prompting them to pass on to the next generation.

mean that everyone else automatically gets that or has thought about it. Don't take things for granted; rather, review some of the simplest teaching techniques and continually reinforce their importance. When those who lead and teach are trained well, they should be able to get and keep the attention of a class, engaging all the kids in the lesson while using a variety of teaching methods. Another advantage of good training is that such teachers can ultimately lead children, corporately and individually, to a place of decision for Christ.

You yourself may be a volunteer too, but if you are a leader of other volunteers, make sure that you concern yourself with the personal spiritual growth of those who lead the children in your church. Making God's Word come alive to them during training times, working as a team to commit certain scripture passages to memory, and holding one another accountable to a prayer filled life will only enhance where you take your children spiritually.

Coaching as Training

One of the keys to continuous training is to listen to your volunteers. Ask them how you can serve them and what they need so they can be more effective in their ministry. It is important to provide constant learning opportunities for your faithful volunteers. In general, they will be receptive to it. Most of us have dealt with people who have been serving with kids for many years and portray a sense that they "know it all." They simply cannot see how training would make them better than they are right now. In that case, include 15 minutes of leadership development or "out of the box" teaching skills in all of your training meetings. Make it inspirational with some practical points. Make it short and sweet. Share stories that melt the heart and remind them why they are doing what they are doing. Involve these people on your training team. Often they simply need to feel valued and will dig deeper into their own teaching techniques when they know they now need to pass this knowledge along to others who have less experience.

Never be critical of those who have been faithful for years and may seem stuck in their own teaching styles; rather, encourage them and set up opportunities to model other teaching methods when they are around. As a leader who trains others, look for the young shining lights in your church. Some of the most creative ways of teaching the next generation come from those who are only slightly older. Teens and young adults can bring a wealth of teaching ideas to the table. Set up opportunities for them to share their ideas with an older generation. Don't let generational differences separate you or hinder your effectiveness as a team; rather, seek to team up those of different ages who can sharpen one another, bringing innovative skills and years of experience into the same classroom. Both innovation and experience are vital for continuous growth and the healthy evolution of your ministry. It is important that we raise a generation of children who value all believers and learn from a church body that is truly intergenerational in its approach to raising up young disciples of Christ.

When training, always keep in mind that your volunteers learn three different ways. Our usual training works well for auditory learners, but what about the visual and the kinesthetic ones? Here is where coaching kicks in. To coach is to instruct, direct or prompt, and to train

intensively by instruction and demonstration. The coaching method of training takes time but is certainly the most effective one. It is the best way to equip new volunteers. Here are some simple yet effective steps for coaching.

- Step 1: Teach the principle.
- Step 2: I do it; you watch.
- Step 3: I do it; you participate.
- Step 4: You do it; I participate.
- Step 5: You do it; I watch.

It is important, at Steps 4 and 5, to do an evaluation. You can ask the new volunteers for their thoughts and feelings about how the class went. Then comment on what was good. Be very specific. Instead of communicating a general statement like "You were good with the kids," be more specific about what they did, like saying: "I love the way you complimented each child on something they did well" or "You saw that Aaron was distracted so you invited him to be a character in your story. That was genius! Great job!" Follow this up with things that can be worked on together. Avoid saying only what needs improvement.

Remind your volunteers that you will be with them during the process. Instead of saying, "You did not handle the registration process well," have a strategy for improvement that communicates: "We should work on having all the kids registered within a 10-minute time frame. Do you have any ideas about how we can do that effectively?" Stay positive and involve them in the process. When coaching, consider your volunteers' limitations. Some have limited time. Others may be young and do not have as much maturity. Be gracious and see their mistakes as part of learning. Don't focus on failures. Reaffirm the good qualities you see and coach for even greater success.

The Leader Volunteer

These volunteers are often leading different areas of ministry and heading up a team (e.g., nursery or preteens). Each volunteer is a leader among leaders and has credibility and respect among the team. These people make the ministry move forward. They have different needs for training and coaching than other volunteers.

Always be quick to listen to their needs. Discuss ways to improve the ministry and have your leadership team learn from one another's perspective and insights. Bring them with you to conferences. Read a book together and share about how you can apply the material to your life and/or ministry.

When coaching these leaders, understand that they will be more critical because they are in leadership positions. Walk through opposition with them. See every hardship as an opportunity for your team to grow together. Show them the godly way to deal with conflicts. When things do not seem to work, challenge them always to be a part of the solution and not the problem. Show them through example how to lead a team and value others. Help them place boundaries in their lives. Leaders who find balance and health between their family needs, work demands and volunteer involvement are those who stick

with you in the long run. People need to know that you place more value on who they are than on what they do for you.

Seven Elements of an Effective Training Session

Every good training session is:

Scriptural: Children's ministry is, overall, a direct answer to the Great Commission. We are instructed to make disciples, and that is exactly what we are doing as we spiritually pour our lives and God's Word into those to whom we are called. Our training should use scripture to highlight key concepts. For example, we should use God's Word to show how we must partner with single-parent families because God cares for the orphan and the widow. Similarly, we can teach about having profound respect for the work of God during prayer, because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In all training, it is critical to draw people back to the biblical reasons for what we do.

Understandable: Your teaching should be presented in a simple yet effective way. It should be understood by your youngest volunteer.

Applicable: Training must be appropriate and relevant to a teacher's present situation and yet allow equipping for what they may encounter down the road. For instance, they may not have a handicapped child in their setting right now, but if and when they do, they will be ready to welcome and embrace that child and teach them according to their needs.

Participatory: Ask your team members to share their thoughts and ideas. They often come with better ideas than you may think. When talking about ideas concerning how to keep the attention of children, open the discussion to all volunteers to share methods that have worked for them.

Hands-on: Make an element of your training very practical. Give leaders tips and techniques they can use the next time they teach. This will ensure that they leave feeling excited and motivated.

Inspirational: Share illustrations of how principles or teaching techniques made a difference in a personal situation you encountered.

Continuous: Pass along articles or recommend books so your volunteers can learn more about certain topics. Create a newsletter in which you pass along teaching techniques or reminders. List podcasts and websites of value. Make every effort to attend a conference once a year with your team. Not only are these great equipping settings, but they can also provide space for the team to develop stronger bonds and value one another.

Reflect

In which areas do your new volunteers need to be trained?

In which areas do your faithful volunteers need to be trained and challenged?

How can reverse mentoring take place in your team? Which creative teaching ideas can a younger generation pass on to an older generation?

Who are your key leaders, and how can you be intentional in training and coaching them?

Respond

Design a training session that is 15 to 20 minutes in length (your outline should be 800 to 900 words). Follow the “seven elements of an effective training session” set out in this session. Limit yourself to one topic of focus for the training session. Be clear and concise.

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Module 4
Session 4

**Honouring and
Celebrating Volunteers**

SESSION 4

Honouring and Celebrating Volunteers

by Janah Hansen and Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

As children's ministry leaders it is easy to get so focused on serving the children that we forget to invest in our volunteers. In addition to equipping and supporting our volunteers in ministry, it is important to let our volunteers know that we see the work they do in the ministry, that we recognize them, and that we take time to celebrate successes and milestones along with them. In this session, you will be infused with ideas about how to honour and celebrate your volunteers. We have asked several experienced leaders in children's ministry across British Columbia to join us in sharing practical and effective ways to make their volunteers feel extra special.

Read

As a volunteer, one of the most memorable appreciation events I had the honour to attend carried an Olympic theme. Printed invitations indicated that the dress code was athletic gear. Church staff and department heads cheered and presented ministry medals and water bottles that had the church name and logo on them to each volunteer as they arrived. Staff acting as "media" interviewed volunteers as they came in the door, asking them about their service in the church and community and their accomplishments during the past year. This was broadcast by live feed into the foyer, where everyone gathered for appetizers. As we were ushered into the auditorium for the "Opening Ceremonies," Olympic theme music played and announcements were broadcast in English and then translated into French. Then the room darkened, the music became dramatic, and two dancers with ribbons performed a choreographed modern dance. Volunteers had a heartfelt laugh when, partway through the dance, the senior pastor and the worship leader popped out from behind backdrops with a big red satin banner and did their own dance. How they kept straight faces was beyond me as the volunteers were all crying with laughter! Once everyone had settled down, we shared in a time of worship together. Then each department head came out, introduced themselves, explained the work of their ministry, and told of the contributions made by their volunteers. The lead pastor concluded the program with a brief talk expressing appreciation for the faithfulness of the congregation and challenging us for the year to come. The evening was capped off with a delicious but simple pasta dinner and lots of laughter and fellowship.

This memorial event made us leave that evening feeling valued, loved and appreciated. We couldn't wait to come back to church and serve God's family again! As a children's ministry leader, I've put on several big events with my volunteers. We've had barbeques, red-carpet galas and even an appreciation cruise—yet sincere appreciation does not always need to be communicated on such a grand scale. I know a children's pastor who always sent me cards with a special handwritten message of encouragement on my birthday, and for Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. Those cards made me feel

acknowledged and special. If, like me, you buy cards for your volunteers with the best of intentions but they end up just sitting on your desk, try sending a short e-mail or picking up the phone and making a quick call when a volunteer comes to mind. It doesn't even need to be a special occasion. The most important thing for them is to be affirmed in what they are doing and to know that they were being thought about.

Let's hear from some others as they share their own experiences of appreciation for those they work alongside.

Monica Columbus, Children's Pastor

Christian Life Community Church (CLCC)

Abbotsford, BC

At CLCC, in our Tree Fort (kids) Ministries, we love our volunteer leaders! Our favourite way to show them our appreciation is to send handwritten notes and treats from time to time, to offer an inspirational mini-retreat evening with a great speaker, or to honour them with a good meal and door prizes. Our big focus for our faithful volunteers is simply called "Appreciation Sunday." On that Sunday, usually held at the end of May, we give our leaders a break—we do not have any children's ministry programs for children in kindergarten and up. All of those kids sit with their parents and then help serve a "Thank you, leaders!" cake to all those who serve so faithfully. Children in grade 4 and up sign up to help an adult with a task in the morning service. This not only relieves some adults but also shows gratefulness and gives children an understanding of the time and effort put out by our team of committed volunteer leaders. Everywhere you look, there are kids on Appreciation Sunday! They are on the worship team, the prayer team, serving in the coffee bar, acting as ushers, serving as offering attendants and check-in attendants. They are greeting at the door, running the media screens during the service, helping with sound—you name it! It is so inspiring for the adults, and a great learning experience for the kids and their parents. We know our volunteers enjoy their break; they feel valued and appreciated by the children and families they serve. This annual Appreciation Sunday supplies much inspiration for our volunteer leaders to keep serving in the places of God's calling.

Kim Quigley, Children's Pastor

Richmond Pentecostal Church

Richmond, BC

Children's ministry is such a volunteer-based ministry that, without those who give of their time, it would not happen. With this in mind, it is imperative to show genuine appreciation to the volunteers I get to minister alongside. The words "Thank you" best describe my appreciation. I try to be careful with my gratitude so it's not expressed in a flippant way. People know the difference between a half-hearted thank-you and true appreciation.

My expressions of appreciation come in the form of e-mails which celebrate a worker's success or a quick "You're Awesome" card that I drop in the mail. I sometimes do seasonal gifts such as a gift card at Christmas. I have also planned dinner get-togethers where I prepare some yummy treats for our workers. Another way I show volunteers they are appreciated is by trying to implement their ideas into what we do in our children's ministry.

This shows them that I hear what they are saying, and that I see the value in adding their ideas to our program. All of these expressions of thankfulness are offered in the hope that our volunteers will hear and what a great blessing they are to me, to each other, to the children and their parents, and also to our entire church.

Andy DeHoog, Children's Pastor

Christian Life Assembly

Langley, BC

Dale Carnegie said that one of the most fundamental techniques for handling people was to "give honest and sincere appreciation." Carnegie was not suggesting mere flattery; he was talking about "a new way of life." Appreciating volunteers cannot simply be a one-time event or gift. It has to be an attitude and a part of the culture of the ministry. Make eye

contact and simply say, "Thank you." Do that often. Get to know individual volunteers enough to know how they like to be appreciated. Ask, "What is that person's 'love language'?"

Small, occasional gifts can go a long way. At Christian Life Assembly in Langley, BC, we gave all new volunteers a coupon for a free beverage at our church's café. Seasonally, such as at Christmas, we created a small, nicely packaged bundle of chocolates for each volunteer.

Get to know individual volunteers enough to know how they like to be appreciated.

The expression of appreciation should be appropriate to

the extent of service or event. Giving VBS workers a midweek pizza lunch is always appreciated! A lunch is fairly substantial, but the fact that it's pizza keeps it casual, which fits with VBS.

Appreciation events need to be as convenient as possible for volunteers to actually attend. Sunday is a great time as workers are at church anyway—either lunch after a morning service or a light breakfast before morning service works well. Including the volunteer's immediate family speaks volumes in recognizing his/her commitment and valuing the sacrifice a whole family makes for one of its members to volunteer.

Encourage parents to express their thanks to children's ministry volunteers. Set up "Appreciation Stations" in a few places in your building where parents can stop by and write a quick thank-you note to their child's Sunday school teacher and then personally deliver it to them.

Public recognition is always a nice touch. Whenever you have the opportunity to be in front of your congregation, brag about your ministry volunteers. You can even include a short time of commissioning them to the work they are undertaking. It is good to do this as you approach fall and new programs kick off. Introduce workers, acknowledging their commitment and dedication, and welcome the entire congregation to join you in praying for them.

Ramona Mauer, Children's Pastor

Evangel Church

Kelowna, BC

Well, I have to admit this is something I have a great passion for! What volunteers contribute is of great significance because it has eternal value. Children's ministry is not a one-person show. It requires a team effort to be effective and biblical. Our team needs to know that I value them and the gifts God has given to each of them. As a children's pastor, my responsibility is to lead, train, encourage and support the team. In turn, our children will receive the best care possible from these amazing individuals who are on the front lines of ministry. The following is a list of ideas you may find helpful. Some require little money but a lot of imagination or just some quality time spent in the kitchen, while others you most certainly have to budget for. As a woman, a challenge may be finding items that are "man friendly." You may just need to find a man to bounce your ideas off to ensure they would be appreciative (careful: most men won't necessarily appreciate a pedicure!).

- Host a banquet complete with a red-carpet entrance. Handout special gifts at the tables and awards to honour volunteer workers.
- Gift cards for a restaurant dinner are always appreciated—who doesn't like a night off when it comes to making dinner?
- Make some homemade popcorn and dress it up in pretty cellophane bags with a thank-you tag.
- Put together a food hamper for a volunteer family in need (it doesn't need to be Christmas to do this—always be watchful for your workers who may be in need).
- Wrap up a bag of assorted candies with special messages attached or bake some brownies and cookies and deliver them in a nice jar with a message of thanks.
- Fill a gift bag with household or toiletry items that workers would find useful (e.g., soap, tissues, pens, air freshener etc.).
- Host a Mystery Menu Supper—everyone loves a little surprise dinner!
- Write thank-you notes (for both for volunteers and their spouses and families).
- Give gift certificates for a coffee establishment or a local spa for a manicure or pedicure—treat them to something they may not treat themselves to. An afternoon coffee or tea getaway is usually better than giving a worker another coffee mug to go with the several they have already been given!
- Host a dessert night—you could even do this after a children's ministries time—for leaders only!
- Take a volunteer to a hockey game.
- Create a volunteer scavenger hunt with thank-you prizes to be found along the way.
- Give a gift certificate for a Christian bookstore and recommend a few of your favourite leadership or devotional books as suggestions to check out.
- Rent a swimming pool or host a pool party at your house (or the home of someone in the church if you don't have a pool). Invite volunteers and their families—you may need to do this a few times to include everyone if you have a lot of workers.
- Organize a trip to a local farm that may have a little pie shop or coffee counter. Food and games in a country setting are always fun and relaxing; maybe even a sleigh ride and hot chocolate if the weather is cold.

- Organize an ice-skating party for your workers and their families.

The key to appreciating volunteers and honouring them is to know them well and to know what they like (or don't like)—and even when the best time is in their schedule if you are going to plan an event. Whether you are going big in your planning or simply writing a note and popping it in the mail, be sure that it comes from the heart!

Reflect

The word “honour” is mentioned over 300 times in the Bible. One of the definitions of “honour” can be found in the Greek *timao*, which means “to prize, to fix a value upon.” What value do you give to your volunteers? What “price tag” do they carry as they serve?

Reflect on the biblical mandate to honour volunteers as found in Romans 12:10. This verse advises us to “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

In your own words, write a paragraph about what this verse means and give five practical examples of how a children’s ministry leader can show devotion or honour to another.

Reflect on one thing that one of your leaders (past or present) did that made you feel important and valued.

Many volunteers who have been serving for a long time resist change. They often do so because they find their area of service to be part of their identity. How can you honour these veteran volunteers and assure them that even in the midst of change, their experience, wisdom and insights are valued and celebrated?

Respond

Decide on little steps that you will take immediately, and which you will continue to do weekly, to be more intentional and efficient in honouring your volunteers. Write down at least one thing—or maybe even two—that you are going to implement right away. It could be something like writing four thank-you cards each week to show appreciation to those you work with. Or maybe even pausing long enough to simply smile and say a heartfelt “thank you” every time you see a volunteer. These little things make a world of difference, especially when someone is new on the team or perhaps doesn’t get a lot of recognition. Plan a monthly appreciation event, activity or acknowledgement for the next three months. Getting the idea and putting it on the calendar is the first step to actually making it happen.

Another simple way to honour your volunteers monthly is to post a certificate or a picture of the “Volunteer of the Month” on a bulletin board. Making your acknowledgement public means that others will begin thanking that person as well and passing positive comments their way. Your simple act will become contagious and will cause your team to be grateful for one another.

Consider hosting a seasonal meal or something that will tie into the next holiday time. Check out upcoming conferences in your area and, if your budget allows, consider providing a discounted or free registration. If your church is unable to cover the cost of the conference registration, even a coffee or tea at the local coffee shop can show your team you care and are thankful for their volunteer efforts.

Show your plan for the next few months to someone to whom you are accountable, then do your very best to stay on target with your plans and decisions. Honouring volunteers is one of the most important things you can do!

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Module 5
**Children
and Development**



Module 5
Session 1

**The First Five
Formation Years**

SESSION 1

The First Five Formational Years

by Kathy Zelman and Graham Greenwood

While we are all uniquely and wonderfully made by our Creator with individual details right down to the patterns of our fingertips, there is an equally impressive process where the DNA that defines us also causes us to grow and develop in a structured and orderly way.

Understanding how God has designed us to grow and develop is essential knowledge to have when developing and leading programs for children. It helps us choose toys and activities that are engaging for babies, design safe and inviting environments for toddlers, put protection in place, and make our lessons relevant to preschool children. For example, understanding that two-year-old children are normally possessive and that the skill of playing with another child does not usually develop until a child is three is both relieving to the parent and critical knowledge for the classroom teacher planning playtime for their classes.

Read

There are three main categories of development we will consider in this session—the physical, the social and emotional, and the intellectual.

Physical

Physical development refers to a child's size, the development of their bodies, and their physical abilities. As a child grows and their body becomes more capable, they are able to participate in a broader range of activities and complete a wider range of tasks. Their independence will also grow as their reliance on others decreases.

Social and Emotional

A child's understanding of who they are and how they relate to others changes significantly during the first five years of their life. At birth, they express themselves most significantly through crying, are generally unaware of the needs of others, and gain comfort through familiar touch. Over time, they gain skills to more effectively communicate with others, become more sensitive to their needs, and develop critical skills such as sharing and empathy.

Intellectual

A newborn has limited intellectual development; they have felt needs, such as hunger or discomfort, and immediately express them until the need is met. As they grow, they become increasingly conscious of the environment they are in and develop an understanding of cause and effect. Over time, their intellect develops to the point where it begins to process the environment and gains mastery over their physical, social, and emotional reactions.

Normal Development in the First Five Years

The charts that follow list significant developmental milestones for children over the course of their first five years of life. They are a consolidation of the work of a number of respected child development experts including Jean Piaget, James Fowler, and Erik Erikson.

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was a Swiss psychologist and philosopher who authored a theory on cognitive development in children. He became an authority on child development through the study of children's understanding by observing them, talking with them, and listening to them while they worked on exercises he set. His view of how children's minds work became very influential in education theory. He determined that children cannot undertake certain tasks until they are psychologically ready to do so.

A few important thought to keep in mind as you review the charts:

- The ages and stages presented are to define the sequence and approximate timing of development in children, with the intent to help in defining reasonable expectations and challenges for different groups of children.
- Few children, if any, will follow this sequence and timing exactly. It is normal for a child to vary from the norms in different areas. For example, while most children begin talking at a year and progress gradually, some children don't talk until much later and then begin with a much better vocabulary and grasp of grammar and syntax. Psychologists believe one of the most significant factors is birth order.
- Major family crisis or changes can cause developmental delays. Often the child "catches up" to their peers as the crisis is resolved and family life returns to a consistent pattern.
- Parents and caregivers should be concerned only if a child is consistently delayed in multiple areas, or if certain key skills are significantly delayed. In all cases, they should consult their child's doctor or local health unit.
- Our understanding of child development continues, particularly the complex interaction between biology (genetics), environment and culture.

Each of these categories (physical, social/emotional, and intellectual) impacts each child differently and contributes toward their unique development.

Development in Children (1-4 months)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
<p>Skin is sensitive.</p> <p>Eyes are moving together.</p> <p>Can grasp/reach objects with hands or feet.</p> <p>Coos and makes noises.</p> <p>Muscle strength/ control improves, supports their head (2-4 months).</p> <p>Starting to roll (1 month); can roll over (4-7 months).</p>	<p>Squeals/smiles at familiar faces.</p>	<p>Learning to communicate (by crying and cooing).</p> <p>Observing their new surroundings.</p>

Development in Children (4-8 months)

Physical	Social/ Emotional	Intellectual
<p>Sits independently (5-9 months).</p> <p>Crawls (5-11 months).</p> <p>Pulls to stand (6-12 months).</p> <p>First teeth begin to appear.</p> <p>“Teething” on various objects.</p> <p>Eating solid foods (6-8 months).</p> <p>Uses finger and thumb to pick up objects.</p> <p>Puts everything in their mouth to explore.</p> <p>Grabs and shakes objects.</p>	<p>May show stranger shyness.</p>	<p>Plays peekaboo.</p> <p>Doesn’t understand “NO”.</p> <p>Vocalizes mum-mum/da-da.</p>

According to Erik Erikson, “when the balance of care is sympathetic and loving, then the psychological conflict of the first year (basic trust vs. basic mistrust) is resolved on the positive side.”¹ The trusting infant expects the world to be good, so he feels confident about venturing out and exploring it. The mistrustful baby cannot count on the kindness and compassion of others, so she protects herself by withdrawing from people and things around her.

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) became known for his theory of psychosocial development in which each stage includes an inner struggle that needs to be solved. If the person solves it on the positive side, they are promoted to the next stage of psychosocial development.

Development in Children (8-12 months)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
Most baby teeth appear. Sees and points out items up to 20 feet away. Begins to stand alone. Crawls up and down the stairs. Walks with adult support. Observes everything. Reaches and holds a toy. Handles objects more intentionally. Picks up objects or finger foods. Stacks objects. Drops or throws objects. Cannot intentionally place something.	Apprehensive about strangers. Cooperates with dressing. Waves goodbye.	Babbles in baby language. Can follow simple commands. Imitates activities like playing a drum. Drops things intentionally. Repeats an action to see what happens.

Development in Children (12-24 months)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
Rate of growth slows.	Plays pat-a-cake.	Develops their own jargon.
Six to ten teeth appear.	Enjoys rhymes and songs.	Language forms into intelligible words.
Walks independently; may not be steady.	Tries to imitate facial expressions.	Two-to-three word sentences.
Gets up and down unaided.	Begins to understand conversations.	Answers questions by pointing.
Falls often.	Less wary of strangers.	Can identify some body parts.
Pushes and pulls toys when walking.	Helps pick up and put away toys.	Acquires and uses five to 50 words.
Throws objects deliberately.	May play independently.	Enjoys object hiding activities.
Sits in a small chair.	Enjoys being held and read to.	Put toys in mouth less often.
Begins scribbling.	Likes to know an adult is near; gives hugs and kisses.	Enjoys picture books.
Likes to feed himself/herself.	Enjoys being around others but doesn't play cooperatively.	Offers a toy but doesn't want to share.
May be able to drink from a cup.	Begins to assert independence.	
Builds a tower of two or four blocks.	May have tantrums.	
	Curious about everything.	
	Exploration may lead to danger.	

The Toddler Years

The great conflict of toddlerhood is autonomy versus shame and doubt and is resolved favourably when parents and caregivers provide young children with suitable guidance and reasonable choices. Some toddlers will toilet train with confidence and learn to do other tasks on their own. Overcontrolling or undercontrolling caregivers can cause a toddler to feel shame and doubt in his or her abilities. For those children, adjustment problems will most likely arise in toddlerhood, and sometimes even later in their lives.

According to Piaget's theory, children up to two years old are in the "sensorimotor stage."² During this stage, children realize that their actions can produce a result. They realize that things continue to exist even when they are no longer in their sight (e.g., "Mommy is in the next room").

Overcontrolling or undercontrolling caregivers can cause a toddler to feel shame and doubt in his or her abilities.

Development in Children (The Two-Year Old)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
Standing steadily and straighter.	Shows signs of empathy and caring.	Hand-eye coordination is improved.
Sixteen baby teeth.	Wants to comfort upset children.	Can do grouping tasks.
Squats to play.	Affectionate.	Beginning stages of cause and effect.
Climbs stairs in an upright position.	Uses physical aggression when frustrated.	Knows when parents are missing.
May be able to jump up and down.	Has temper tantrums and is impatient.	Names objects in picture books.
May achieve toilet training.	Not able to share and is possessive.	Recognizes shows and movies.
Can throw a ball.	May not take turns or wait.	Imagination begins to emerge.
Holds dishes.	Enjoys helping.	Enjoys being read to and participates.
Likes to open and close things.	Imitates daily activities.	Understands results of communication.
Enjoys water and sand play.	May get bossy with caregivers or parents.	Vocabulary of at least 300 words.
Uses riding toys.		
Can build a tower of up to six blocks.		

Development in Children (The Two-Year Old)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
	<p>Plays beside but not with another child.</p> <p>Is defiant; uses "NO" to showcase authority.</p> <p>Exact routines bring security.</p>	<p>Can understand more than they say.</p> <p>Uses three-to-four word sentences.</p> <p>Repeatedly asks, "What is that?"</p> <p>Is able to verbalize needs.</p>

Development in Children (The Three-Year Old)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
<p>Growth is slow but steady.</p> <p>Straighter posture; tummy doesn't protrude; baby fat disappears.</p> <p>Can jump off a step and walk on tiptoe.</p> <p>Teething stage is complete.</p> <p>Eats independently.</p> <p>Walks up and down stairs unassisted; can balance on one foot and kick a ball.</p> <p>Rides a tricycle.</p> <p>Can catch and throw a large ball; may show hand dominance.</p> <p>Shows improved control of crayons/markers.</p> <p>Builds a tower of eight or more blocks.</p>	<p>Stacks objects in sized order.</p> <p>Friendly; laughs frequently; eager to please.</p> <p>Seems to understand taking turns but will not always do so.</p> <p>Will play BESIDE another child and may begin to play WITH another child.</p> <p>Joins in simple games and group activities, sometimes hesitantly.</p> <p>Talks to self when playing alone.</p> <p>Make-believe play using various objects.</p> <p>Possessive of toys; may be aggressive.</p> <p>May have a comfort item; e.g., blanket/toy.</p>	<p>Listens attentively to stories and interacts.</p> <p>Speech is understandable most of the time.</p> <p>Isn't accurate with word endings; e.g., double "ed," double plurals.</p> <p>Can answer who, what, where questions.</p> <p>Knows how to count to 10.</p> <p>Knows how to name at least six colours.</p> <p>Reference to a time frame is not accurate; e.g., Baby Jesus was born yesterday?</p>

Development in Children (The Three-Year Old)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
Can turn pages of a book.	Most are still unable to share.	
Achieve bladder control.	Attention span is 10 minutes.	
May be able to dress self.	Can sense the emotions adults display through their body language and tone of voice.	

Development in Children (The Four-Year Old)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
Walks a straight line on a curb.	Bends the truth with made-up stories.	Recognizes rhyming words.
Hops on one foot.	Tantrums and sulking occur.	Identifies more letters of the alphabet.
Climbs ladders, trees and playground equipment.	Outgoing and friendly; overly enthusiastic at times.	Improved grammar.
Jumps over objects.	Imaginary friends are common.	Still reads picture books.
Runs, starts, stops, and moves around objects.	Cooperates and participates in groups.	Can identify relative size; e.g., bigger/smaller.
Improved spatial awareness.	Can be selfish; unable to take turns.	Responds to questions and instructions.
Improved aim for throwing, etc.	Uses verbal aggression rather than physical.	Very good storytellers.
Builds a tower or structure of 10 blocks or more.	Shows pride in accomplishments and seeks adult approval.	Relates time in sequences.
Paints and draws with purpose, though product may differ from idea/original.	Insists on independence even when they are unable to accomplish a task.	Counts to 20 or more.
May print some letters and draw some shapes.	Able to have "close friends" - may exclude others.	Uses directional prepositions.
Improved grip; e.g., pencils.		Uses possessives.
		Answers "whose?" "who?" "why?" and "how many?"
		Inflects voice.

Development in Children (The Four-Year Old)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
Forms shapes and objects from playdough. Improved hand-eye coordination.	Able to have "close friends" - may exclude others. Enjoys role-playing and make-believe activities.	Likes stories about how things grow/operate. Refers to people, objects and activities that aren't present.
Threads small wooden beads on a string. Can run in circles.	Needs consistent guidelines and expects fairness.	Answers appropriately what to do when tired, cold or hungry. Recites and sings simple rhymes and songs.
		Still does not understand time frames (yesterday=past; tomorrow=future).

Development in Children (The Five-Year Old)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
May begin to lose baby teeth. Walks backwards, toe to heel.	Can collaborate with others in imaginative play. Shows affection and compassion.	Understands serial numbers (first, second, third, etc.), able to count to 100 and recognize numbers to 10.
Can do summersaults, toe touches, balance beam; skips and catches and throws ball. Rides a bicycle, usually with training wheels.	Shares and is able to take turns. Generally obedient.	Can compare and order objects; e.g., same and different, smallest and biggest, more and less, etc.
Keeps balance on one foot and jumps/hops. Fair fine motor skills (manipulation of pencil, scissors, etc.).	Still needs comfort, but may want it discreetly. Rudimentary control of emotions.	Understands time of day, may be able to read a clock; knows what a calendar is for, and knows significant days and places.
Hand dominance is evident.	Proud of accomplishments. Likes to entertain.	Improved attention span.

Development in Children (The Five-Year Old)

Physical	Social/Emotional	Intellectual
Builds more complicated structures with blocks.		<p>Eager to learn, able to learn in class environment, asks lots of questions.</p> <p>Needs repetition to learn.</p> <p>Expressive.</p> <p>Able to participate in storytelling using visual cues.</p> <p>Makes up simple jokes and riddles.</p> <p>Knows alphabet, beginning to read; enjoys crafts and puzzles and knows colours.</p>

According to Erik Erikson, this psychological stage is “initiative vs. guilt.”³ During this third stage, often called the “play stage,” the developing child learns to:

- imagine, to broaden skills through active play and make-believe.
- co-operate with others.
- lead as well as follow.

Conversely, a child who is hindered by guilt:

- is fearful.
- hangs on the fringe of groups.
- continues to depend on adults.
- is restricted in play skills and imagination.

These children are still in Piaget’s “pre-operational” stage of intellectual development. Although not a direct quote from his writings, “Play is the work of childhood,” is commonly attributed to Jean Piaget.

Reflect

Observe some children you know well (your own children, nephews or nieces, or a friend’s child). From your own observations of their development or in discussion with their parents, graph the ages when they reached the developmental milestones in the charts you have been reading. Observe the variations and consider what factors may have caused them variation (genetics, birth order, major family events/trauma, disability, etc.).

Now think about the way your ministry divides children (likely by age groupings) and ponder whether these are helpful or hindering to the children you've considered above.

Respond

Take the charts and a note pad to the spaces used by children up to age five in your ministry. Using the identified stages of development, sit in each area and look for things that are good and things that should be changed for greater effectiveness. For example, consider if the toys are age appropriate for the physical stage of development. Are you expecting children to share or play co-operatively before they are ready? Are the activities challenging enough to encourage development and growth?

Work with those in charge to begin implementing the changes you will need to adapt your ministry to the patterns of development you observe for the children in your ministry.

End Notes

1. Erik H Erikson, "Eight Ages of Man," *Childhood and Society: The Landmark Work On The Social Significance Of Childhood* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963). 247-250.
2. Jean Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (New York: International University Press, 1952).
3. Erikson, 255-257.

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Module 5
Session 2

**Spiritual Development in
Children**

SESSION 2

Spiritual Development in Children

by Kathy Zelman and Natalie Rogge

In the previous session, we focused on the first five formational years of a child. Those early years are critical to what the rest of the child's life will look like: how they will act, react, the decisions they will make, the fears they may carry, and so much more. Also critical in the early stages of life and these young years of development is the spiritual formation that does, or does not, take shape. The foundation for how a child responds spiritually is formed even before they are of school age. The principles and patterns for the spiritual development of children, in the various age categories you will see laid out in this session, can be nurtured, taught, and influenced whether you are a child's parent, grandparent, their caregiver, ministry worker, or pastor. It is so important that we strive to help children develop spiritually. It is something they cannot do on their own. They need those who are spiritually strong to guide them, teach them, challenge them, disciple them, and to model Christ-like character for them.

Spirituality is not a separate compartment of an individual; rather, our spiritual life must weave through all that we are and all that we do as believers. In this session you will find excerpts of faith development theories and easy-to-read tables that will help you understand spiritual development in children. The tables are laid out for you to examine, study, and work to commit to memory. Prayerfully consider the importance of each component as you study and apply what you are learning to your area of children's ministry involvement. These concepts must be continually reinforced to assist each child in developing their faith with a consistent "layered" approach. Layering of faith concepts and principles is of utmost importance.

Spiritual concepts learned in earlier ages can be built upon and realized in more detail as a child matures, just as a tree is strengthened and becomes fuller with each year's ring of growth.

The tables and the majority of the information detailed in this session have been drawn from *Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children*¹ by John Trent, Kurt Bruner, and Rick Osborne (Focus on the Family) with only slight changes to accommodate this format. They are used in this Leadership Certification Course with the express permission of Focus on the Family.



Initial Stages of Spiritual Development

In the various charts that follow, Trent, Bruner, and Osborne have detailed spiritual truths as they can be introduced to children in each age group. You will notice that as the tables progress (and the age of a child increases), the information contained in each category will

be more detailed. We suggest that you use these charts to help you understand the spiritual comprehension of children at different age levels, and also to present the gospel progressively to your students as they grow and develop. This first chart is designed to explain the initial stages of spiritual development in children from birth to age four.

Spiritual Development in Children (0-4 years)				
Knowing		Loving	Living	
Who is God	What He Has Done	Relationship with God	Being What God Wants	Doing What God Wants
God exists.	God created everything.	Prayer is talking to God in Jesus' name.	God wants you to be good, kind and loving, just like Him and Jesus.	God wants you to go to church.
God loves you.	God created you.	You need to talk to God regularly.	God wants you to see and think good things.	God wants you to obey your parents.
Jesus loves you.	God gave us the Bible.	You need to listen regularly to stories about God and Jesus from the Bible.		God wants you to learn to share your things with others.
God wants to take care of you.	God's Son, Jesus, died for your sins so you could be with God.			

Some people think that nursery workers are just babysitters—this couldn't be further from the truth! They are the first point of contact, representing what each little one will come to know as “church.”

On the positive side of spiritual development, babies can decide that church is a good and safe place where their needs will be taken care of and they can trust their caregivers. Conversely, they could feel insecure and think church is not a good place to go. This will carry on throughout much of their early childhood until the right children's worker, or even the parent, can break that. A main goal in this stage for church ministry is to lay the foundation of a trusting environment which can translate later in their little lives to “God can be trusted”—a foundation in their life of faith.

According to developmental psychologist and theologian Dr. James Fowler, in the “pre-stage” or “primal” level of faith development, the first pre-images of God are formed in a baby's mind during the first year of life.² “Primal” faith (birth to two years) reflects an early learning directly related to the safety and warmth of their environment. Conversely, if their environment has been abusive or neglectful, their faith at that level will be negatively affected.

In the second year of life, children can begin to understand that God exists, that God made all things, and that He made them. For example, when looking at trees my toddler exclaimed, “Mommy ...Jesus ...twees!” to which I responded, “Yes, Jesus made the trees.” Simple outbursts from the very young show us how little ones are already beginning to

connect God to creation and love. By two years of age, they know God loves and cares for them. Most of all, this is a time when the child can establish the sense that church is a safe and loving place.

These little ones can gain such foundations of their Christian faith as: church is a good place; it is a safe place where people are kind to me and help me; we pray at church; I can have a happy time at church; my caregivers can meet my needs; and, best of all: Jesus loves me and cares about me.

Two-year-old toddlers learn through repetition. It helps them when they hear the same Bible story over and over. Caregivers model God's love by being consistent. Music and actions help these children remember what they learned about God, Jesus, and the Bible. They can begin to experience prayer and worship by imitating those caring for them; for example, hearing and participating in a simple repetitive prayer such as "Dear Jesus, thank You for my yummy snack! Amen."

Once a child turns three, it is best if all five of their senses are involved. Children learn God's character through the teacher's words and actions. It is essential to show God's love by being consistent and full of grace. The children are forming images of God in their minds by observing the adults around them. They can repeat simple Bible verses and learn truths like: "God made everything," "God made me," and "God gives us family and friends." Children at this age can say simple prayers using music and motion, which reinforce their learning. Praise and worship at their level are vital to their spiritual growth. Children at this age also begin to understand the concept of giving an offering at church.

According to Fowler, children aged three to five are in stage one of their faith development. Their faith level is called "Intuitive-Projective Faith."³ This stage is a reflection of the impressions of their parents' faith and that of others in their church, and is gathered from what they see, hear, smell, and touch. Considering children will build their first faith ideas from what they see and hear in church, visual images and beautiful worship spaces are vital. Classrooms for these children should be child-centred in every way—from furniture, to toys, to the wall coverings. Also, it is highly valuable and impacting for these children to watch their mom and dad and others in worship.

Four-year-old children can learn that praying means talking to God. God wants us to obey Him and our parents. These children ask many questions about God. They can understand that Jesus loves everyone, and that He wants us to love Him and others. They can identify right from wrong but may need coaching to make right decisions. They are also beginning to learn empathy. Four-year-olds are able to learn that God can be trusted, that He is powerful, that He can do anything, and that He knows everything.

Intermediate Stages of Spiritual Development in Children

As children approach school age, their ability to comprehend slightly more complex and personal ideas increases. Use the following chart and discussion to help you teach early school-age children and to expand your list of teachable topics. This will also help you present the gospel effectively with language and ideas that are understood by children this age.

Spiritual Development in Children (5-6 years)

Knowing		Loving	Living	
Who is God	What He Has Done	Relationship with God	Being What God Wants	Doing What God Wants
<p>God is your loving Father. He wants to guide, teach, love, protect, and provide for you.</p> <p>In some ways, you are just like God. He has feelings and thoughts. He can understand you. Jesus showed us who God is and what He is like.</p> <p>In other ways, you are very different from God. He is everywhere and He can do anything and He knows everything.</p> <p>Jesus has always been with God and is God.</p>	<p>God tells you about Himself, His Son, Jesus, and His plan for you in the Bible: the One Big Story.</p> <p>God sent His Son, Jesus Christ to die for you.</p> <p>God has prepared a place for you in heaven. Jesus is coming back for you.</p> <p>You can read all about God and His Son, Jesus, in the Bible or in a Bible storybook. You can have personal Bible reading and time with God.</p>	<p>You can have a relationship with God by accepting what Jesus did for you: salvation.</p> <p>God wants to have a relationship with you.</p> <p>You can talk to God through prayer.</p> <p>You can thank God for all He has done and still do for you.</p> <p>You can ask God for wisdom and guidance.</p>	<p>God has a plan for you.</p> <p>The Bible tells you the kind of person God wants you to be.</p> <p>God's way works best. You can be all God wants you to be by following Jesus.</p> <p>God wants you to put only good things into your heart.</p> <p>When you sin, you should ask God to forgive you—and He will.</p>	<p>God wants you to spend time with other Christians, both at church and in the community.</p> <p>God wants you to help others and be nice to them.</p> <p>God wants you to obey Him and follow Jesus in everything.</p> <p>God wants you to share and take good care of everything He gives you: stewardship.</p> <p>God wants you to understand and memorize Scripture verses.</p>

Five and six year old children can pray. They know they can pray to God anytime, anywhere, about anything. They can understand that God made them special. They can show God's love by doing kind things for others. They can realize that the Bible is true, and that it teaches us about God. They are beginning to understand that God is Father and Jesus is His Son. They can also understand that God is most powerful, so they can even pray for others. In my experience, children raised in Christian families that truly live out their faith come to know Jesus as their Saviour between the ages of four and seven. At this age, God is Father and Jesus is His Son. They can also understand that God is most powerful, so they can even pray for others. In my experience, children raised in Christian families that truly live

out their faith come to know Jesus as their Saviour between the ages of four and seven. At this age, children can begin to understand that God hears them and answers their prayers; for example, Jesus always helps us find things we lose because He knows everything. These children enjoy Bible stories, especially stories about heroes.

Late Stages of Spiritual Development in Children

As children progress beyond the early stages of school, they enter a new phase of learning and comprehension. In the reading that follows, you will be given two sets of charts, one for children in the seven to nine age range and a second for students in the 10 to 12 age range.

These two charts will help you guide children through their progressively more complex spiritual understanding. However, though your spiritual teaching will increase in complexity, many of the mechanics of spiritual development are similar in both of these stages. With this in mind, take time to read and understand the information contained in the charts:

Children can pray. They know they can pray to God anytime, anywhere, about anything. They can understand that God made them special.

Spiritual Development in Children (7-9 years)

Knowing		Loving	Living	
Who is God	What He Has Done	Relationship with God	Being What God Wants	Doing What God Wants
You can be sure that God is real. There is only one God. God exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is called the "Trinity." God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is eternal. Jesus is both God and man. Nothing exists apart from God.	The Bible is true. It is God's Word and you can trust it. God made sure that all the stories in the Bible together tell the One Big Story. The Bible you have is exactly what God wanted to give you. God wants you to learn and study the Bible.	You read the Bible to learn about who God is and what He has done and is doing. You can pray your own prayers with your parents. Prayer benefits you in many ways. Keep praying: persistence, tests, and trials. You can trust God and turn your life over to Him.	God wants you to learn and grow and become like Jesus. Growing is a learning process. Your character should match God' character. God wants you to develop talents. God wants you to develop the fruit of the Spirit.	Church is God's idea. Jesus is the head of the church. At church you learn about God and encourage one another to follow Jesus. God wants you to understand what a blessing people and good relationships are.

Spiritual Development in Children (7-9 years)

Knowing		Loving	Living	
Who is God	What He Has Done	Relationship with God	Being What God Wants	Doing What God Wants
God's character is true, honest, loving, compassionate, just, generous, selfless, forgiving, merciful, trustworthy, faithful, impartial, and holy.	<p>The world is full of sin. There is an enemy in the world (Satan). Not everyone obeys God.</p> <p>Jesus died to save you from the penalty of sin.</p> <p>Jesus defeated sin and Satan.</p> <p>Jesus is the only way to God.</p>	<p>You should learn to seek God.</p> <p>Jesus gives you peace.</p>	<p>God wants you to mature and develop your personality.</p>	<p>God has taught you right from wrong. He did this to keep you safe and give you a good life.</p> <p>The Ten Commandments are a good guide for life.</p> <p>God wants you to share your faith.</p>

Compare the previous chart for seven- to nine-year-old children with the slightly more complex ideas presented in this second chart for children in the 10 to 12 age range:

Spiritual Development in Children (10-12 years)

Knowing		Loving	Living	
Who is God	What He Has Done	Relationship with God	Being What God Wants	Doing What God Wants
Not everyone believes the truth about God, but there are ways you can respond to their objections (handling contrary opinions about God, basic apologetics, and other religions).	<p>God wants you to explore the One Big Story.</p> <p>God put the Bible together in a fascinating way.</p> <p>You need to learn how to study the Bible.</p>	<p>You can pray on your own.</p> <p>You can read the Bible on your own.</p> <p>You can learn to worship God and Jesus on your own or in a group.</p>	<p>God wants you to choose to grow, learn and seek His wisdom.</p> <p>God's grace: you don't have to do it on your own. God is working in you by His Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>God wants you to choose to commit your entire life and everything you have to Him.</p> <p>God wants you to choose His way because you love Him and want to be like Jesus.</p>

Spiritual Development in Children (10-12 years)

Knowing		Loving	Living	
Who is God	What He Has Done	Relationship with God	Being What God Wants	Doing What God Wants
	<p>God lets His people serve Him and express their worship to Him in different ways.</p> <p>God gave us an accurate record of His Son, Jesus.</p> <p>God wants you to tell others about what Jesus has done.</p> <p>Jesus will return as Judge, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth.</p>		<p>God wants you to find and follow His will for your life.</p>	<p>God wants you to learn to seek and follow His Spirit's leading.</p> <p>You need to learn how to resist Satan and temptation.</p> <p>You need to get involved in church and find your place in the body of Christ.</p>

Children between the ages of six and ten can grasp the greatness of God's love and can accept God's quality of being present everywhere. They understand Jesus as a friend, but it helps them to have specific examples of how Jesus expresses love and care. Children can comprehend that they can talk to God anywhere and at any time by themselves. They can understand that the Old Testament tells what happened before Jesus was born while the New Testament tells of His birth, His work on earth, and His return to heaven. Discerning between right and wrong comes more easily at this age. This is a key age where salvation occurs. Bible memorization is still an important skill to develop at this age. Their faith is matter of fact and unwavering. These children understand that God wants them to be like Jesus. They are beginning to grasp what it means to be in a relationship with Jesus. It is essential that Christian adults consistently model their faith as these children will see and identify inconsistencies.

According to Fowler, these children are in stage two of their faith development, known as the "Mythic-Literal Faith"⁴ stage. They can expand their Bible knowledge greatly, and they can articulate their faith. At this time, they still largely believe what their parents believe and have difficulty understanding that people believe differently (other religions). They also have a much better capacity for rational thought and will be working through distinguishing between fantasy and reality. These children have an almost legalistic view in their faith

(they see things in a “black or white” manner). These children need to be coached very carefully through difficult situations which may not “fit” into their high sense of justice manner of thinking.

Professor James W. Fowler formed a theory of faith development based on the developmental theories of Piaget and Erikson. He believed that, as children journey through their life of faith, their spiritual development will mirror various other areas of development according to their age.

Reflect

Think of the children you would know well and possibly even teach. Choose one child in each of the following age categories:

- Ages 0-4
- Ages 5-6
- Ages 7-9
- Ages 10-12

Beginning with the first age group, write down the name of the child chosen. Take time to review and reflect on the “Knowing,” “Loving,” and “Living” points set out in the charts for this session. Journal thoughts that come to mind as you reflect on what and how you have taught this child and where this child is in their spiritual development.

Respond

Use your current curriculum to help you evaluate if the content is reaching the spiritual development goals laid out in the charts from the previous pages of this session.

Consider the age group you will be teaching ahead of time and compare your lesson plan with the “Knowing,” “Loving” and “Living” points for that age group. Edit your curriculum with ideas and thoughts that will influence their spiritual development. Consider the following as you make notes:

- How does the teacher to student ratio impact your lesson plan?
- Focus on the activities—do they draw the children in and are they keeping with the spiritual development stage for their age range?

- Is the biblical learning component helping or hindering the maximum impact for spiritual development that you can have with your students?

After you have completed the teaching of that particular lesson, and evaluate your presentation of that lesson. Respond honestly to the following:

- What components went well? Did activities “flop” or “fly”? Why?
- What did you notice about how the children interacted with the teaching?
- Was each lesson component taught in a way that was relevant to their level of spiritual understanding?
- What would you do differently next time?

Now take the information you have focused on in this session to a deeper level by answering the questions below honestly. Ideally, it would be best to have another children’s ministry worker, pastor, or parent walk through the evaluation with you. Make incremental changes; pick 1-2 things that you could implement in the next few months. Re-evaluate or incorporate the below questions into your leader’s meeting on a regular basis to bring about positive change in the spiritual climate of your kids’ ministry.

1. The Bible is the core of our teaching and our instruction book for life and living.

With that in mind, I need to ask myself:

- a. Am I encouraging students to use our classroom Bibles or bring their own?
- b. Do I take time to teach them how to find chapters and verses?
- c. Do I urge them to read their Bibles at home, and do I give them guidance on how often and in what manner?

2. Do I give opportunities for response moments (altar calls) to what is being taught in the scripture? For example, am I facilitating moments that lead to the following responses:

- a. Salvation calls/Repentance
- b. Baptism in the Holy Spirit
- c. The call to missions, evangelism, full-time ministry
- d. Prayer
- e. Participation in Communion
- f. Responses that could lead to action e.g., Water Baptism decisions

3. It is important that children grow up to understand the character and nature of God. Jesus knew His Father’s heart, loved others with deep compassion, and lived with unwavering values and purpose. As disciples of Christ, we all must show a desire to follow closely in the ways of our Master. With that in mind, I need to consider:

- a. When was the last time I taught on the character and nature of God? How was it taught?
- b. Have I created space for the students to encounter the Holy Spirit for themselves and experience His character and nature directly through worship moments and the Word?
- c. How do I connect the church with the home? Do I resource parents to continue the spiritual development of their children in all three points of

“Knowing,” “Loving,” and “Living?”

- d. Do I give opportunities to the children and families to serve together inside or outside the church?

Remember, what you do is foundational—you are preparing these children to be launched into youth ministry. Your investment in their spiritual development will yield a lasting harvest of disciples of Christ and future leaders of the church.

End Notes

1. John Trent, Rick Osborne, and Kurt Bruner, *Parent's' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children* (Focus on the Family, 2003).
2. James W Fowler, “Stages of Faith,” *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Fransicso, California: HarperOne, 1995), 119–121.
3. Fowler, 122–134.
4. Fowler, 135–150.

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Module 5
Session 3

**Theological Development
of Children**

SESSION 3

Theological Development of Children

by Natalie Rogge and Kathy Zelman

As children's workers, it is most important that we do all we can to see a generation of children grounded in the truth of God's Word. George Barna, in his book *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions*, makes this statement:

...if you want to shape a person's life—whether you are most concerned about his or her moral, spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional or economic development—it is during these crucial eight years that lifelong habits, values, beliefs and attitudes are formed.¹

In Session 1 of this module, we focused on those important first five years of a child's life and the development process that takes place, paying special attention to the physical, social/emotional and intellectual changes that occur as they grow. In Session 2, our focus was on a child's spiritual development. This included understanding what a child is able to know, how they can express love, and how that can then apply to how they live.

Categorically, we reflected on their spiritual development in the following ways:

- Who God Is
- What He Has Done
- Relationship with God
- Being What God Wants
- Doing What God Wants

This session will now take us into the next step of helping a child to understand theology. Yes, "theology" itself is a big word for a young child to comprehend. If we think that the study of theology is reserved for those going on to Bible college and seminary to become pastors, teachers, and scholars, we have fallen short. Every child of God must seek to gain a strong understanding of theology.

Read

Luke 2:40 tells us that Jesus, as a child, grew and became strong, that He was filled with wisdom, and that the grace of God was with Him. He had favour with God and with people. But because He was the Son of God, He embodied the truth. As those who have been born into sin, we must study and learn God's Word so we can live it out. As Paul instructs us in 2 Timothy 2:15 (CEB), "Make an effort to present yourself to God as a tried-and-true worker, who doesn't need to be ashamed but is one who interprets the message of truth correctly." As we pass on the teaching of God's Word to the next generation, it is critical that we do so with passion and accuracy and in ways that are sensitive to what is accessible to children as they develop.

The word “theology” could cause a child to check out pretty quickly. It’s not a word used in their vocabulary, yet it is simply the study of the nature of God and religious belief. As children’s workers, that is what we do every week. We seek to help children understand God and His Word and what we believe so they can live as God’s children and strong disciples of Christ with full dependency on the Holy Spirit. It is important that we help children understand that God is so much greater than our minds can ever comprehend.

Isaiah 55:8–9 makes this point very clear, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Our job as children’s workers is to help children dig deep into God’s Word and discover for themselves all the truths He has revealed. The more we know God, the easier it is to bring glory to Him for all that He has done and is doing. It is through our lives, when lived in holy and righteous ways, that our love and our obedience will automatically bring Him glory.

Children need to get to know God before they can say they love Him, otherwise their words are empty. Because they are young, their knowledge of God may be little or simple, and that is okay.

They will learn more as they continue to be taught, and as God brings understanding to their minds. As they grow and as their spiritual lives are nurtured—both at home and at church—their understanding of God and His ways will deepen. Do all you can to encourage students to learn on their own as well. Consider developing a study plan, designed for their age and stage of development, and work alongside them, holding them accountable and answering any questions they may have. Many curricula include take-home papers or digital downloads that can help children and families in their continued study on a subject. Be sure to point this out to parents and encourage them to make it part of their weekly family routine at home. We cannot expect that they will see the take-home paper or social media post or even know what to do with it.

In fact, it may come home or into the car in the form of a paper airplane or some creative origami shape. I’m sure you’ve seen that on more than one occasion!

Progression of Theological Development by Age

As in the last few sessions of this module, charts have been helpful in pointing out the breakdown of stages of development by category. Again, this is the method used in the following so you can focus very specifically on what a child can comprehend theologically in their different stages of development. These charts measure theological development in six key areas:

1. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit
2. Sin and Salvation
3. Death, Heaven, and Hell
4. Miracles
5. Baptism and Communion
6. The Bible and Prayer

The tables have been drawn from *Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children*² by John Trent, Kurt Bruner and Rick Osborne (Focus on the Family) with only slight changes to accommodate this format. They are used in this Leadership Certification Course with the express permission of Focus on the Family.

Theological Comprehension (2-3 years)		
God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit	Sin and Salvation	Death, Heaven, and Hell
<p>Avoid using the term "Lord." Refer to God the Father as "God," and to Jesus and the Holy Spirit by name.</p> <p>Do not refer to the Holy Spirit as the "Holy Ghost."</p> <p>Do not attempt to teach the Trinity "three in one" concept at this age.</p> <p>Jesus is real and their friend.</p> <p>Stories about Jesus are in the Bible.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit leads us and helps us do good things.</p> <p>Will not understand concepts of "the devil."</p> <p>Can distinguish right and wrong.</p>	<p>The Bible has rules I want to obey.</p>	<p>After death, you see and live with Jesus in heaven.</p> <p>Heaven is a happy, wonderful place. I want to go to heaven.</p> <p>God made angels. Angels are strong and protect me.</p>

Theological Comprehension (2-3 years)

Miracles	Baptism and Communion	The Bible and Prayer
<p>God does amazing things called miracles.</p> <p>Creation is a miracle of God.</p>	<p>Baptism is a happy time. People go under water.</p> <p>Communion help us remember Jesus.</p>	<p>I can talk to God about everything.</p> <p>The Bible is an important book about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>The Bible is true and is filled with true stories.</p>

Theological Comprehension (4-5 years)

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit	Sin and Salvation	Death, Heaven, and Hell
<p>Can understand that Jesus is God's Son.</p> <p>Jesus was cared for by human parents, Mary and Joseph.</p> <p>We can be adopted by God.</p> <p>Keep stories of Jesus' life simple.</p> <p>Children think in the present tense (Jesus was born this Christmas?).</p> <p>Jesus was kind. I want to be kind.</p> <p>Jesus was born, grew up, helped people, died, and came back to life.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit is my special helper.</p>	<p>I sin when I break God's rules.</p> <p>When I sin, I should be sorry and ask for forgiveness.</p> <p>God will forgive me when I ask Him.</p>	<p>All people will die, most at an old age.</p> <p>Death is not a punishment for bad behaviour.</p> <p>Heaven and hell are real places.</p> <p>Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven.</p> <p>Angels are real, wise, wonderful beings who work for God.</p> <p>We are not to pray to angels.</p>

Theological Comprehension (4-5 years)

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit	Sin and Salvation	Death, Heaven, and Hell
<p>The devil is real and is God's enemy.</p> <p>The devil wants to break God's rules.</p> <p>God is more powerful than the devil.</p>		

Theological Comprehension (4-5 years)

Miracles	Baptism and Communion	The Bible and Prayer
<p>Jesus performed miracles.</p> <p>God gives power to do miracles.</p>	<p>Jesus was baptized.</p> <p>Baptism is a special time.</p> <p>Communion is a special and serious time.</p> <p>Jesus wants us to remember Him.</p> <p>The bread helps us think of His body; the cup, His blood.</p>	<p>God listens to me and answers my prayers. Praying is not wishing.</p> <p>The Bible teaches about prayer.</p> <p>God's Word can help me know how to act.</p>

Theological Comprehension (6-8 years)

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit	Sin and Salvation	Death, Heaven, and Hell
<p>God the Father is loving, real, and is always with me. He has a plan for my life. I can share His love with others.</p> <p>Jesus died but came back to life.</p>	<p>Sin must be punished.</p> <p>Only Jesus could pay the penalty for my sin.</p>	<p>Everyone has a spirit that lives after death. Jesus has the power over death.</p> <p>Christians go to be with God in heaven after they die.</p> <p>Whoever doesn't know Jesus as Saviour will go to hell.</p>

Theological Comprehension (6-8 years)

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit	Sin and Salvation	Death, Heaven, and Hell
<p>Jesus is real even though I can't see Him. As God's Son, Jesus, had power to do all the things written in the Bible.</p> <p>Jesus' words can help me know what to do; they should be memorized.</p> <p>The Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit, who helped Jesus' friends after He went to heaven.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit can help me develop the fruit of the Spirit.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit lives in each Christian.</p> <p>The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are real but are not the same person (beginning comprehension of Trinity).</p> <p>The devil wants me to disobey God, but I can choose to obey God.</p> <p>Jesus will help me resist the devil; good can overcome evil.</p>	<p>God sent Jesus to die for our sins because He loves us.</p> <p>Jesus took the punishment for everyone.</p>	<p>Heaven is a special place for members of God's family.</p> <p>Angels are more powerful than people.</p> <p>God is more powerful than angels. Angels are sometimes seen and can look like people.</p>

Theological Comprehension (6-8 years)

Miracles	Baptism and Communion	The Bible and Prayer
<p>Miracles happen only with God's power.</p> <p>Miracles are a proof of God's message.</p>	<p>Communion helps us to remember Jesus' death.</p> <p>The bread represents Jesus' broken body.</p>	<p>God always answers prayers. He answers in different ways.</p> <p>My behaviour does not decide God's answers.</p>

Theological Comprehension (6-8 years)

Miracles	Baptism and Communion	The Bible and Prayer
Miracles can and still do happen today.	<p>The wine or grape juice represents Jesus' blood.</p> <p>I can follow Jesus' example in baptism.</p> <p>It is important for me to be baptized. It is a public statement of faith. The Holy Spirit is involved in baptism.</p>	<p>The Bible can help me with problems and can answer my questions.</p> <p>The Bible is divided into the Old and New Testaments.</p> <p>The Old Testament was written before Jesus was born.</p>

Theological Comprehension (9-12 years)

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit	Sin and Salvation	Death, Heaven, and Hell
<p>God is Spirit and reveals Himself in the Bible.</p> <p>God reveals Himself through His Son, Jesus.</p> <p>No one can know everything about God.</p> <p>Jesus is both man and God.</p> <p>Jesus died to save me from the punishment of my sins.</p> <p>Taking my punishment proves His love for me.</p> <p>Jesus knows and understands everything about me.</p> <p>Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with me.</p> <p>Jesus is my example to follow.</p> <p>Jesus did miracles because He is God.</p>	<p>Sin is breaking God's rules that are in the Bible.</p> <p>God must punish sin.</p> <p>Only Jesus could pay for everyone's sin.</p>	<p>Death happened because of sin.</p> <p>Death is the end of the physical body.</p> <p>Everybody has a spirit that continues to live after death, either in heaven or hell.</p> <p>Heaven is an exciting, wonderful place, hell is a horrible place.</p> <p>People die at all different ages from different causes.</p> <p>Only through faith in Jesus, will people live in Heaven after they die.</p> <p>An angel's purpose is to serve and glorify God.</p> <p>Some angels remain around the throne of God in Heaven worshipping Him continually.</p>

Theological Comprehension (9-12 years)

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit	Sin and Salvation	Death, Heaven, and Hell
<p>The Holy Spirit lives within Christians.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit helps us serve God and others.</p> <p>There are special gifts of the Holy Spirit that God gives to Christians.</p> <p>God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all God in three different persons.</p> <p>The devil is real and is God's enemy.</p> <p>God can help me win the struggle between good and evil.</p>		

Theological Comprehension (9-12 years)

Miracles	Baptism and Communion	The Bible and Prayer
<p>Jesus' miracles were predicted in the Old Testament and preformed in the New Testament.</p> <p>The leaders and people in the New Testament also performed miracles.</p> <p>God's people can perform miracles today by His power.</p>	<p>Baptism is important because Jesus did it.</p> <p>Baptism is a public statement of faith and should be celebrated.</p> <p>Communion is a time to remember everything Jesus did for us.</p> <p>Communion is a special and serious time. Jesus began this tradition during the Last Supper with His disciples.</p> <p>Communion takes place with other Christians.</p>	<p>Prayer is talking to God. I can talk to God about everything.</p> <p>God listens to my prayers.</p> <p>God answers prayers in many ways and does what is best.</p> <p>The Bible contains history that shows God's plan for the earth and for me.</p> <p>We can study the Bible to help us in our daily lives.</p>

We must see to it that we are teaching the Bible to the next generation accurately, and in a way that is accessible to children. This is why it is always best to follow a curriculum with a sound and solid theological base. There are Pentecostal curricula that line up with the *Statement of Essential Truths* of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. If you seek to use other teaching resources, be sure to take into consideration the statement of faith they are built upon. If you are seeking to raise up young Pentecostals, it is important that you use resources that would help you to do so.

To be a strong and effective children's ministries leader, you must spend time in the Word and in study. This means more than just reading a chapter at a time. Spend time studying thematically or systematically—there is a difference. Being weak in your understanding of what you believe or having an inaccurate or superficial understanding of God's Word can bring confusion to both you and your students. God's Word is meant to bring comfort, hope, life transformation, and a reason for living. In the North American society we now live in, those with different beliefs cross paths with our children every day. Some may even try to persuade them away from what they are being taught, calling it "incorrect" or "nonsense."

As children move into the older elementary years, they begin questioning what others believe and even why. It is important to discuss with them how not everyone they meet will agree with what they believe. This is why they must be students of the Word—knowing what God's Word says and standing on a firm and sure foundation in their spiritual walk. As they get older, they will even discover those who present something that sounds like it comes from the Bible, but it may have a slight twist to it that may not line up with scripture. Work with your students to help them develop a strong understanding of God's Word and to work hard at memorizing scriptures in their young years. This will definitely help them down the road to be able to quickly discern right from wrong when the pressure is on to comply with someone else's teaching or beliefs. During these young and formative years, it is so important that we parents and children's leaders do our very best to lay a strong spiritual foundation that will not crumble, even when shaken.

Reflect

Reflect on your childhood. Were there people who spent time pouring the truth of God's Word into your life? If so, when and how? How effective was it? Do you feel you have a strong understanding of God's Word?

Each individual is different and has been raised in distinct contexts. Maybe you didn't have a strong foundation as a child. How has that influenced your life and growing up years, and even the person you are today? As a leader, where has your theological understanding largely come from?

If you could choose two people you know to be your spiritual leaders/mentors as you were growing up during those young and formative years, who would they be and why?

Respond

Using six blank pages, write the names of the column headings from the charts on separate pages. Now choose the age group you work most closely with, and go back and study that particular age group's chart. Do not just read through it, but actually consider each comprehensible point, one section at a time. Once you feel that you know the development points well in the first section ("God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit"), close your course book and return to the blank page. Write the age at the top of the page and begin to recall the various development points for that age and category.

Do this same exercise for another age group that you may work with less often, or one that you need to understand better.

This type of exercise will help you down the road as you are teaching and need to recall what children are able to comprehend—or not quite. You will find yourself teaching a little differently and maybe explaining things in less or more detail, depending on the age group you are leading.

End Notes

1. George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should be Your Church's #1 Priority* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003), 18.
2. John Trent, Rick Osborne, and Kurt Bruner, *Parent's' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children* (Focus on the Family, 2003).

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Module 5
Session 4

**Spiritual Formation for
Teachers Too**

SESSION 4

Spiritual Formation for Teachers Too

by Natalie Rogge

What are the things that determine how you make choices? Do you base your choices on fact or feeling? Are you someone who buys on impulse or do you spend time doing research on a product before making a significant purchase? Every day we are faced with choices in life: what we will eat, what we will wear, how we will get places, how we will guide our children (if you have a family), etc. We can choose to answer the phone or let it go to voice mail. We can choose if we are going to study or watch television: scroll through social media or read God's Word. Life is filled with choices. Some are really easy to make and others require time, effort, and wisdom.

Our days are filled with choices. In all we do, it is important that we make wise choices—ones that are not only good for us, but also for those we love and invest our lives in. Just as we plan towards what we will feed our physical bodies, so we must plan for what we will feed our spirits. As a leader, you pour your life into the next generation. What you are feeding yourself spiritually will determine what the next generation receives from you, both in your teaching times and as they watch you live your life. After all, our lives speak loudly, even when we are not saying a word.

Read

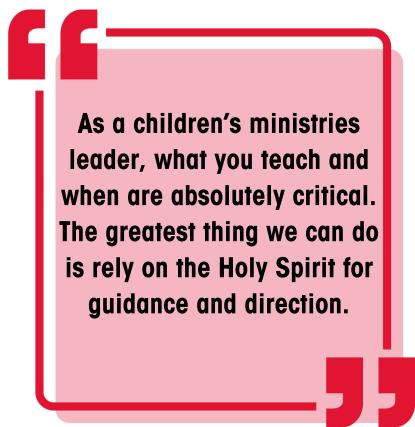
The very first decision ever made determined the course of human history. That decision, which affected the lives of every man, woman, boy, and girl who came after them, was made by none other than Adam and Eve. These first two people made by God who were given a choice. God gave them two trees: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. God was very clear in His instructions that if they ate of the first tree, they would surely die.

Adam and Eve made a choice that affected not only their lives, but the lives of endless generations after them. In some ways, as leaders and Christian educators, our decisions have the same sort of effect. What we teach, and how we choose to teach it, can greatly impact the spiritual lives of those coming after us—or not. What was it about the fruit that enticed Eve and Adam so much that they could not handle the temptation to reach out and choose it? Was it the shiny, sparkling outer skin? Its packaging? Was it the sweet smell in the air that was so overwhelmingly appealing? Was it the ease with which it could be picked? Was their choice determined purely by the nutritional value it would provide for their healthy bodies? Probably not.

How we choose what we will teach to educate the next generation must be about more than bright and shiny packaging, ease of use, or how we are influenced by others around us—the most recent “scent in the air.” We must do our homework. We must determine for ourselves whether a curriculum, a resource, a song, or a teaching kit is in line with the

instructions God is giving us. As you have walked through the three previous sessions, you have seen how children develop and the importance of spiritual development as it unfolds in a growing child. A strong foundation must be laid, right from birth, so that faith, spiritual truth, and concepts can be built year after year as children grow and mature. As you have read in other sessions of this course, parents have the most important role to play in their children's spiritual growth. The church, however, also has a responsibility. The leaders and members of the local church can support parents and families in their role as the primary spiritual nurturers of their children. Some parents need lots of support, ideas, and resources while others are more confident and well-equipped to spiritually influence the lives of their children.

Today's kids must learn the Word of God so they will stand strong in their faith. It is important that they understand God's Big Story, all the littler stories in His Word, and the reasons why they have been communicated to us. Each one is filled with life lessons on how we must live. It is critical that we challenge our students to understand and memorize God's Word so they are able to recall it in time of need. "Need" isn't only when they find themselves in trouble or without hope. It is about being able to daily live out the Bible and to communicate His Word to others so they also can know God's plan for their lives.



As a children's ministries leader, what you teach and when are absolutely critical. The greatest thing we can do is rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance and direction.

As a children's ministries leader, what you teach and when are absolutely critical. The greatest thing we can do is rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance and direction. It is not about the latest and greatest curriculum, or the one that the kids would find most fun and entertaining. Often, in fact, it can be the opposite. We must really take into consideration what children need before considering what they may want. Following a scope and sequence that take children through the key lessons of scripture from the time they are just infants is of utmost importance. In doing so, we eliminate teaching gaps and neglected topics. Some

topics are harder to teach than others, but many times those are the very lessons that must be taught, lest a child stumble and fall because that Bible truth was never one that shaped their life, their character, and their spiritual value system.

When making curriculum and resource choices, be sure that the segments contained therein are the "non-negotiables" of good Christian education. Children must read and memorize scripture. They must not only hear Bible stories but discuss them, uncover the truths contained in them, and be able to share them with others in ways that are exciting and relevant. Today's children must be made aware that yesterday's stories are as powerful today as they were when they occurred. When searching out solid teaching resources, look for material that brings out a strong application of how the truth applies to life today, and what that can and should look like. A good story without a practical application is just a good story. It's the dialogue with children about how they can apply the spiritual truth to their daily lives that will make it come alive and bring solid life transformation.

As you educate the next generation, be aware that a daily dialogue with God is of utmost importance, both for you as the leader and for them as the object of your ministry. Praying is important, but so is listening. In fact, the two go hand in hand. Praying without listening to God is like trying to ride a two-wheeled bike with only one wheel!

We can sometimes be so focused on teaching a lesson that we neglect the most important One in our efforts. God wants to be part of the teaching process. The Holy Spirit wants to speak to your heart as a teacher, and also to the hearts of your students. Time should be given for this, and often it is best when that time is not the last two minutes of class while waiting for the “big church” service to be dismissed. Train yourself to casually watch the clock and ensure that you give adequate time for talking and listening to God. Intentionally placing the “God-dialogue” time in the centre of a lesson can radically transform a student’s view on prayer and its importance. As you teach, weave in real-life stories of how the Holy Spirit has spoken to you and how you have responded. Your life can be the greatest tool, resource, and teacher.

As we seek to develop fully devoted followers of Christ, it is so important that we take note of how Christ taught. Jesus didn’t have curriculum—He was the curriculum. He didn’t have videos or interactive screens; rather, He painted the real-life picture before the very eyes of those who needed to hear the message or see the miracle. He used parables, taking hold of on-the-spot teachable moments. He was sensitive to time and to how His audience would learn best. He appealed to the mind, the emotions and the behaviour of His audience and followers. He involved the senses of those He was teaching.

Some children learn better visually, while others learn best by hearing or doing. Jesus was intentional in addressing the concerns of the culture and the social needs of the people. Likewise, we can teach biblical principles by using some of the key news or media items today that children could understand. Jesus would have considered even the developmental stages of those He was teaching and influencing. Think how differently a doctor would have processed things compared to a fisherman. Jesus understood where each person was coming from and communicated on their level in ways they could relate to and understand. Most important, Jesus taught based on who He was and the character He possessed. Although we know that in our humanity we will never be on a level or achieve a status that is equal to Christ’s, our students must see Jesus in us and in all that we do, at all times. As the Bible teaches, we must live lives that are holy and righteous—knowing there are always little eyes watching and ears that hear every word. Keeping this in mind, we must also be aware that if our students ever see or hear us say or do something that would be displeasing to our heavenly Father, those moments, too, can be teaching lessons. It is important to acknowledge and admit our wrongdoings. It keeps us humble and honest, and this is something that the next generation needs to see. They are looking for sincere and transparent leaders, people who walk with Jesus and are able to talk about their difficult times as well as their moments of goodness and celebration.

In all you do as a Christian educator, leader, teacher, and follower of Christ, be consciously aware that your choices determine the future of your students. Always choose wisely, whether it is curriculum, lesson theme, music, memory verse, prayer points, or otherwise.

Ensure that all of God's Word is being taught and taught well.

The next time you enter a grocery store, consider not only how you are feeding your physical body, but also how you feed your spiritual life—and the spiritual lives of those you love and invest in. Are you preparing "meals" for your students from scratch, using only the best ingredients, or are they being fed from the "fast food" or "frozen food" section? Are you buying your greens from the fresh or organic sections, or do you go straight to the "day-old" rack at the back of the store, hoping to find something that's reduced for quick sale? The choices we make about what we pass along to our own children, and to those we teach, have long-lasting results that will shape them for life. Choose wisely, and only after much prayer.

Reflect

Personally:

1. Name some choices you make each day and each week that positively affect your health and well-being.
2. List some choices and thoughts that affect you negatively—things you need to work to come against on a daily or weekly basis.
3. How have you chosen curriculum in the past?
4. Are there other things you should be considering when choosing teaching resources?
5. Search up a sample copy of a curriculum you have never used before for teaching purposes. Most curriculum companies will send you a sample copy if you ask for one online. Go through it and reflect on the various lesson segments. Do you feel there is anything missing? If so, what? Are there ways in which that particular teaching resource could be improved for its age group? How?

Respond

Think of some different New Testament Bible themes that you have not taught about in depth over the past few years. It might be good to revisit these with your students. Here is a list to get you started:

- The Lord's Prayer
- The Beatitudes
- The armour of God
- The Romans Road—leading others to salvation
- The End Times—although this subject can be heavy, it is important that children aged 9 to 12 can begin to understand what is going to happen in the last days according to scripture, particularly the book of Revelation
- The Parables
- Letters to the Seven Churches—focus on who they were written to and why
- The Church (Book of Acts)

Take some personal study time in the Old Testament prophets.

There are many great lessons here that can be passed on to the next generation. We tend to spend lots of time teaching Old Testament stories about Jonah, David, Samson, Moses, and others—but what about the less known, not so famous characters? They are in the Scriptures for good reason. Find an Old Testament story you have never taught and create a one-hour teaching outline for your lesson. Include a memory verse, object lesson, activity, game, Bible teaching component, life application follow-up and maybe even a video if you can find one. You may even want to make your own. Use your lesson in a class setting and teach it. It may very well become a new favourite for your students!

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Module 6

Spiritual Growth in Children



Module 6
Session 1

Spiritual Milestones

SESSION 1

Spiritual Milestones

by Graham Greenwood

One of the great privileges of being a children’s pastor is that, in the words of Catherine Stonehouse, we get to “join children on the spiritual journey.”¹ Christianity is not just about salvation; it is a relationship with God, redemption through Christ, and ongoing life in the Spirit. We spend our finite life span getting to know our infinite God, looking forward to the day we see Him face to face.

It’s an exciting journey and, like all adventures, we don’t always know how far we’ve come without some external aids. Before the days of GPS and modern technology, stones were placed at the side of the road to indicate the distance travelled.

It’s a similar idea to the practice in the Old Testament: when God did something significant, the Israelites would place stones or build an altar in a geographic location to serve as a marker and reminder of what He had done.

These points of reference, also called milestones, indicate that we are travelling in the right direction. Milestones also give us assurance that we are making progress and give us something to look forward to as we work towards our final destination—because, for us, life is found in the journey!

Read

Brian Haynes has done the church a great service by identifying seven “Spiritual Milestones” that can help structure the discipleship and spiritual growth of a believer and give both family and church cause to celebrate. Brian has taken many of the existing practices in churches and structured them into a single narrative from birth through adulthood, helping everyone to see the journey of faith and making it easier for parents and pastors to join and shepherd children along the way.

Within Brian’s model, each of the milestones includes a core competency—a combination of knowledge, skill, and belief that parent and child are expected to gain. The preparation for each milestone includes a seminar or class for parents and, as they get older, one for children. The milestone itself is marked by both a family celebration and church event. We have used Brian Haynes’ work as a basis for this session, modifying some terminology to make it more Canadian and adding editorial comments to reflect Canadian (and PAOC) realities. We invite you to read his books *Shift*² and *The Legacy Path*³ for a more in-depth examination of these milestones.

Note that we are not advocating you simply import this model “wholesale” into your church. Each one of us lives in a different culture and context, so our language, celebrations, and events will look different. However, the concepts provide a sound

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Note that we are not advocating you simply import this model "wholesale" into your church. Each one of us lives in a different culture and context, so our language, celebrations, and events will look different. However, the concepts provide a sound structure for the journey. We encourage you to prayerfully consider how you can integrate the existing practices and traditions of your church (adding new ones as needed) into a narrative and use a combination of training and celebrations to encourage both parents and children as they grow in faith.

Milestone One: Baby Dedication (Birth)

Expectant parents are inclined to want the best for their child and generally have every intention of being the best parents they can be. They want to provide their child with every opportunity for success. Inundated with reminders that they need to start RESPs and get their child into the best schools and enrichment programs, parents can unintentionally overlook their most important and sacred responsibility—the child's spiritual growth and development. This is a natural opportunity to chart out a child's spiritual journey and to positively challenge parents not to neglect or set aside their spiritual responsibilities.

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- **Seminar** – First steps seminar for parents.
- **Core Competencies** – Parents as the primary faith trainer.
- **Campus Event** – Child dedication ceremony during worship service.
- **Family Event** – Extended family gathering and meal.

Milestone Two: Salvation and Baptism (Ages 7 to 13)

As children are taught about Christ and the human state, the desired response is that they reach out to God in faith and accept the salvation Christ offers, expressing their decision and life commitment in baptism. Children can make significant confessions of faith much earlier than age seven, and these should not be discredited. Rather, understand that as the child grows and matures, their understanding of what Christ did will continue to deepen, bringing lasting heart transformation. It is at this stage that a child will become able to articulate their faith decision in a public fashion that will be meaningful to both themselves and the faith community.

- **Seminar** – How to lead your child to Christ.

- **Core Competencies** – Sin, repentance, salvation and baptism.
- **Campus Event** - Baptism during worship service. How will you include parents as the primary spiritual influence in their child's life?
- **Family Event** – Spiritual birthday party.

Milestone Three: Preadolescence (Grades 5/6)

Adolescence is a natural time for children to begin questioning their faith. It is the time when they begin to find their own identity separate from their parents. The process of questioning is both natural and healthy. Parents and children need to be equipped so that in this process they find their own identity in Christ and develop spiritual disciplines of their own that will keep them on a path of spiritual health. Providing opportunity for extended teaching and time in God's presence in a camp or retreat context can be extremely helpful to the child. Shared experience through a significant family event (like a road trip) can help them integrate their personal and family identity in a healthy fashion.

- **Seminar** – Preparing for adolescence.
- **Core Competencies** – Personal identity in Christ, spiritual growth, and spiritual disciplines.
- **Campus Event** – Preteen retreat.
- **Family Event** – Road trip.

Milestone Four: Purity for Life (Junior High)

As adolescents develop interest in relationships, it is important that parents and the church provide them with scriptural teaching on relationships, holiness and purity. Consider hosting a 'purity ring' ceremony where preteens can make a commitment to God and their parents that they will pursue Christ first in their lives. Seeking the blessing of their parents in any relationships they form in future years is significant.

- **Seminar** – Purity for life.
- **Core Competencies** – Biblical purity.
- **Campus Event** – Purity for life weekend.
- **Family Event** – Purity ring celebration.

Milestone Five: Rite of Passage into Adolescence (Junior High Graduation)

One pitfall that Brian Haynes noted is how the church and the parents defer the preparations for adulthood to a child's late teenage years (ages 16 to 18). The marking passage of responsibility is often deferred to the end of high school while the actual process happens throughout adolescence and should be nearing completion at that point.

Therefore, midway through "youth," as Jr. High is wrapping up you find this milestone.

- **Seminar** – Preparing for adulthood.
- **Core Competencies** – Growing into men and women of God, spiritual gifts.
- **Campus Event** – Rite of passage celebration.
- **Family Event** – Rite of passage celebration.

Milestone Six: Rite of Passage into Adulthood (High School Graduation)

High school graduation marks the transition to legal adulthood. In a healthy context, it is the final transition when the child takes full responsibility for their life (still seeking their parents' guidance and counsel). At this stage, Brian advocates that parents present their child with a written blessing for their life.

- **Seminar** – Preparing to leave home.
- **Core Competencies** - Apologetics, dating and marriage, God's plan for me.
- **Campus Event** - Senior summit.
- **Family Event** – Written blessing.

Milestone Seven: Life in Christ (Adulthood)

Within Brian's model and church context, they enveloped the ongoing process of growing as a disciple of Christ into a single, comprehensive adult milestone.

Reflect

Reflect on your personal spiritual journey. What were the significant experiences that marked your spiritual development? Journal your memories of them and pay careful attention to your age at the time, the people involved, and the aspects of your faith, values, ethics, or relationships that were shaped by those experiences.

Review your experience and highlight the positive points in your journey. Identify the factors that made them positive and think of ways you could replicate them.

Finally, list the things you wish you'd known at different stages of your life. If someone could have taught or shown you what you needed to know, would you have listened to them? Was there such a person in your life? If so, did they lack the knowledge to teach you or were they simply not aware of what you needed? Was there an expectation that "someone else" would be the main teacher or mentor in your life?

Respond

Identify each of the spiritual milestones that currently exist in your church (child dedication, baptism, retreats, graduations, etc.). Identify what they truly represent to the individual and to the family, along with any unique aspects of the celebration. Consider doing this exercise with your church's youth leader as well, as this could create synergy between the two ministries and a more intentional transition into the youth group.

Chart them in chronological order and identify everyone who is involved in each stage or event.

Now it's time to start integrating them into a single path or narrative. Identify all those that affect children within your ministry oversight. Then, compare your milestones to the ones listed in this module and those you identified in your own personal reflection.

On a single page, using a linear format, mark how a child will go from birth to adolescence in your congregation and the different milestones they will pass through. Your goal is not to change anything that doesn't need changing. You will be more successful at leading change in your church if you keep as much familiarity as possible. Start identifying changes and enhancements you can implement that will help to strengthen the training you offer to parents and the preparation you provide for children's spiritual growth.

Now go and get started! Many of these changes can be made quickly and easily. As you implement the changes, begin by using your one-page summary to show others how spiritual growth occurs in your church.

End Notes

1. Catherine Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1998).
2. Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes To Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland, Colorado: Group Publishing Inc., 2009).
3. Brian Haynes, *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting* (Nashville, Tennessee: Randall House, 2011).

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Module 6
Session 2

**Conversion and Baptism
of Children**

SESSION 2

Conversion and Baptism of Children

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

I am always moved by the sight of children who decide to follow Jesus. It is such a privilege to walk with them in their faith journey, to see them through their conversion, and to help them prepare for baptism. This session will help you as you walk through conversion and baptism in children's ministry and will provide a few helpful guidelines along the way. As a starting point, we will briefly discuss Pentecostal theologies of heaven, conversion and salvation. Then, we will look at the components of the gospel message in a simple way. Finally, we will discuss key characteristics of children in order to help you communicate theological concepts in child friendly terms. The information in the second portion of this session will equip you to answer questions like: What is baptism? When should a child be baptized? How can I prepare a child for baptism? This information should be of some help as you prepare children and families in your church to walk through the waters of baptism.

Read

Conversion

Do all good people go to heaven? Why does God have to punish sin? How can I become a Christian? You will face all of these questions as a parent, teacher, or shepherd of children. Your responsibility is to be ready to present sound theology in a way that those you serve will understand.

Comprehend the Components of the Gospel Message

For children, the message of the gospel should be as simple as possible. There are many things they will grow to understand, and many they will not be able to comprehend. Making the gospel message simple and understandable for children gives them a great start in the faith. When I introduce children to Jesus, I make it as simple as ABC.

- A. Admit that you sin and turn to God (1 John 1:9, Acts 3:19).
- B. Believe that Jesus died for you (John 3:15).
- C. Choose to follow Jesus and confess that He is your Saviour (Romans 10:9-10).

God's promise still remains: "All who call on the Lord's name will be saved" (Romans 10:13, CEB). As we internalize the components of the gospel message, we must consider how to communicate these truths to children.

Many resist leading little ones in a personal decision to follow Christ from fear of being too pushy or manipulative. They simply wait for them to come to God in their own time. But children need training and direction in every aspect of life. We guide them as they learn how to walk. We train them to say "please" and "thank you." We teach them how to ride a

bike. Spiritual development is no different. As you broaden your teaching about God, invite children to meet Him. Create an environment that is safe, loving, and accepting. Be truthful about your own need for God, explaining how Jesus is the answer, and then invite them to respond with simplicity and sincerity when they are ready.

Clearing Misconceptions

Children might have misconceptions about salvation and “what it takes” to go to heaven. They may believe they can win their way into heaven if their parents believe in God, if they go to church every week, or if they behave. Some may even confuse baptism as the way to eternity with God. Thankfully, Jesus is very clear in this matter when He says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through me” (John 14:6, NCV). This means we must believe in Jesus and ask Him to forgive our sins; this is the only way to be saved. It is essential that you teach sound theology to the children in your care.

Communicate the Gospel Message

Children—especially younger children—are very concrete thinkers. Keep in mind that many kids won’t know what you mean when you use words like “salvation” or “redemption” or sometimes even “sin.” As you study key verses about salvation, consider how you might potentially explain complicated Christian language in a child friendly way. For example, we can describe sin as a bad choice, something we do wrong, a “no-no,” or disobedience. Other terms like punishment can be described practically. You can talk about being grounded, losing privileges, or getting in big trouble.

Abstract concepts bring confusion to children, especially since we tend to use a great deal of metaphorical or figurative Christian and biblical language. For instance, who would want to bathe in blood? Not me! Yet that is exactly what a child might understand when he hears a phrase like “washed by the blood of Jesus.” Accepting Jesus “into your heart” is another phrase we often use. When my daughter was four years old, she was washing her chest in the bath and proudly announced, “Mom, I’m washing my Jesus.” Her questions followed immediately: “Mom, how did Jesus get in my heart? Did I swallow Him?”

Be aware of your speech as you teach. Do your best to make figurative language easier to understand. For example, you might explain that asking Jesus into your heart is like asking

As you share the gospel with children, continually ask them questions so they have the opportunity to put their new faith in their own words.

Jesus to be your very best friend. You can relate the feelings of joining God’s family to the warm feelings that we have in our hearts for those we love in our own families. As you share the gospel with children, continually ask them questions so they have the opportunity to put their new faith in their own words. It is important for children to understand that they are individually accountable to God. No other person can answer to God on their behalf. A relationship with Jesus is a very personal experience.

Use as many different illustrations as possible to help a child understand faith. Over and above the few listed above, here are two more examples that you might use to describe salvation to kids.

You can explain to children that Jesus is like a perfect medicine. When we are sick, we need something to make us better. Medicine will usually cure us and clean us of the bad things that may have entered our bodies (like colds, the flu, disease, etc.). Sin is very similar. When we sin, we allow bad things to come into our lives, or even our bodies. Sin can corrupt us and even destroy our lives if we let it. But God, who loves us and wants us to be better and live good and healthy lives as His children, is like a doctor. A doctor gives us medicine to cure us from sickness. God has given us Jesus, the perfect medicine, to cure us of our sinful nature. All we need to do is take Him in—we need to invite Jesus into our hearts and lives. He will clean us up, forgive our sins, and make us new beings in Christ Jesus. When we live for Jesus, we never have to be fearful of dying in our sin. Jesus gives life, and His eternal gift is heaven with Him!

Jesus is our key to freedom. We put criminals in jail when they do not obey the law. They are handcuffed and put in jail because they've been found guilty. The handcuffs represent what happens to us when we sin. We get all tied up and can't live in freedom. But there is one way out—the key! When Jesus died on the cross, He beat sin and became that key to our freedom. We simply have to accept His gift and let Him set us free!

Water Baptism: Is it Time to Get Wet?

What is Baptism?

The practice of baptism didn't start with the prophet John. It was a common practice in the first century for religious teachers to baptize their followers. By agreeing to be baptized, the follower expressed his or her commitment to learn, practise and pass on the teachings of the Master. The act of immersion in water was a public declaration that one was taking his relationship to the next level, and that the follower was becoming a dedicated student, or disciple, of a religious master. Today, water baptism is a public declaration of one's desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. By being baptized, we are following the example of the sinless Christ who was baptized by John (Matthew 3:13–17; Romans 6:4).

The word baptism means "to plunge under, dip completely, or immerse in water." That is why most evangelical churches perform full immersion baptisms as opposed to other methods such as sprinkling of water, dabbing the forehead with water, or pouring a small amount of water over a candidate's head.

Water baptism is a ceremony that is rich in Christian symbolism. It symbolizes Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Colossians 2:12). Standing in the water is a symbol of Christ on the cross. Going under the water reminds us of Christ's being buried in the tomb. Coming out of the water reminds us of Christ's being raised on the third day. This practice also illustrates the cleansing and washing of sin by the Holy Spirit as a result of repentance.

It is also a symbol of the new birth that Jesus speaks of in John 3:5 (CEB) “Jesus answered, ‘I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom.’” Going underwater reminds us of the putting to death of our sinful self, and coming out of the water illustrates our emergence as a new creation at conversion.

It is important to clarify that baptism does not bring eternal security to anyone, nor does it bring about salvation. Salvation must happen first. It is only by faith in Jesus Christ, God’s gift to us, that we can be saved (Ephesians 2:8–9). In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands His disciples to “Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In Acts 2:38a, Peter says, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” Every person who repents of their sins and believes in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour can be (and needs to be) baptized. Water baptism is an act of obedience to the Word of God, a public declaration of our commitment to follow our master and teacher, Jesus Christ, and an outward demonstration of an inward change.

When Should a Child Be Baptized?

There is no reference in the Bible to a specific age when children can or should be baptized. However, there are some guidelines you should take into consideration. A child, like any adult, must understand the gospel message, experience personal repentance, be able to articulate a basic faith in Jesus Christ, and manifest a commitment to obey the Word and Spirit of God (John 14:21). As you or your church leadership consider candidates for baptism, it is fundamental that we remember the words of Jesus, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). We must guide children with this in mind. Baptism should be a memorable and meaningful experience for children. The older a child grows, the more likely he or she will look back on their experience with confidence that is evidenced by a sincere and strong desire to follow the Lord.

How Can We Prepare Children for Baptism?

Many older denominations, such as Anglican, Lutheran, or Roman Catholic, have catechisms, confessions, or articles of faith that their members can read or memorize. These often make reference to the creeds that were decided on by Christians in years gone by. A creed is a statement of beliefs that answers the simple question, “What do I believe in?” The Apostles’ Creed is the earliest known example of this kind of belief statement and may have even been used as an early baptismal confession.

Many churches require that each child desiring to be baptized attend a special class accompanied by their parents. In that class, candidates review the plan of salvation, basic Christian doctrines, and the meaning of water baptism. At the conclusion of the class, each child should be able to answer simple questions about salvation and baptism, and articulate a basic declaration of faith.

On the day of this special event, people are often asked to share a portion of their testimony. This can be overwhelming for a child, but your help and a few simple guidelines can make it much easier. To make this as easy as possible for children, you may consider

handing out a guide sheet that helps the candidate express their faith by providing questions and a place to write in their answers. It would be best for them to write the information down, keeping answers short and concise. Further, remind the child that this is about what God has done; they don't have to have all of the answers.

Here is an example of a guide sheet to help a candidate prepare for a baptismal testimony:

- Who I am: Name and age.
- When and how I heard about Christ: Tell us how you came to know about Jesus. You might have heard about Jesus in kids' church or from your parents. Maybe you went to a camp or a friend told you about God.
- When and how I started my friendship with Jesus: How did you make this decision? Was there anyone (friend, parent, or a teacher) with you? Did anyone help you pray? How did you feel?
- Now that I have Jesus in my life: Share how you feel about having Jesus as your Saviour and very best friend. What is your life like now? Is it different from before? What does Jesus teach you? Tell us something exciting that you have learned about Him.
- Why I want to be baptized: Explain why you want to be baptized.

Parental Consent

It is vital to have parental consent before walking a child through baptism. If the child is from an unchurched family, the children's ministry leader must contact the parents or guardians to inform them of their child's desire to be baptized. The leader must take the time to explain to them the meaning of this ceremony. We recommend that you obtain written permission before baptizing a child. In the event that the parents or guardians refuse, do not baptize the child. Encourage that child to continue growing, learning and following Christ. As you counsel the child to honour their parents, talk about when it might be appropriate for them to take the step of water baptism.

If the child is from a believing family, parental consent should be easier to obtain. Some parents, however, would rather wait for their kids to become teenagers, or even adults, before they are baptized. If this is the case, try to get the parents involved in the preparation and training prior to the ceremony. This will allow the parents to witness firsthand their child's grasp of faith. You can also gain their support by welcoming them to be a part of their child's baptism. Some pastors allow parents to baptize their own children. As children's workers and ministers, we must respect that parents are the spiritual leaders of their own children. Getting parents in the water with their children is a meaningful way to engage them in their child's journey of faith.

Reflect

Think back to when you became a Christian. Describe the environment you were part of. What happened to bring you to the place of saying "yes" to Jesus? Did someone invite you to respond? What did your response look/sound like?

Many cases are recorded in the Bible where people were baptized as soon as they became believers (read Acts 8:26–40). Should it be different for a child? Express your thoughts on paper.

Study the “Romans Road” (Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:9 and 10:10). How might you explain this path to salvation to a child?

Respond

Create a one- or two-sentence salvation invitation that you could extend to a child of about five years old. Choose your words carefully, guarding against manipulation, abuse of your authority and trust, or misuse of fear. Now do the same for an 11-year-old child. Make sure your wording is appropriate.

Create a lesson explaining salvation to primary age children. Use the ABC format—Admit, Believe, Confess.

Discuss the philosophy of baptizing children with the lead pastors of your church. Draft an announcement, organize a teaching session for children and their parents, and plan a baptismal service.

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Module 6
Session 3

Spiritual Disciplines

SESSION 3

Spiritual Disciplines

by Caroline Durocher-Bergeron

There is nothing sweeter than the gentle voices of my children saying, “Mommy, play with me.” Of all the people in the world, they want to spend time with me. This reminds me of my own need to be in the presence of my heavenly Father. In the midst of the busyness of our lives, our Saviour invites us to remain in Him. Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can’t do anything.” (John 15:5, CEB). Here’s how children’s ministries pastor, author, and speaker Michelle Anthony brings light to this passage, “The syntax of this sentence doesn’t say that you can’t do anything (because if you think about it, we can “do” a lot). Jesus is making a qualitative statement. He’s saying, ‘Really, in My eyes, it amounts to nothing.’”¹

Our primary responsibility as a leader is not to grow a ministry; it’s simply to remain in Him. The word “remain” is translated from the Greek verb *meno*, which means to stay, wait, continue, or endure. In this session, you will receive practical advice that will help you practise some of the many spiritual disciplines.

Read

Study

There is a difference between Bible reading and studying. While both are valuable, study allows us to reflect on the deep meaning and richness of God’s Word. Scripture tells us that we must study to show ourselves approved (2 Timothy 2:15).

The key to Bible study is to ask the right questions. Here are some examples:

- Who wrote this book and to whom was it addressed?
- What was the author’s intention in writing this book?
- When and where does the story take place?
- Who are the people in the story? What are they like?
- What happens?
- What do the people involved feel/experience and how do they react?
- What do they learn? How do they change?

These questions will help contextualize the passage you’re reading.

Other questions will help you relate to the story and will answer the question, “What does this mean to me?”

- What does this tell me about the character or work of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- Is there a command that I need to observe?

- Is there a promise that is applicable to me?
- Is there advice on how to live my life?

Meditation

Contrary to popular meditation which advocates detachment from the world, godly meditation invites us to attach ourselves to Christ. In his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster writes:

What happens in meditation is that we create the emotional and spiritual space which allows Christ to construct an inner sanctuary in the heart...

Meditation opens the door and, although we are engaging in specific meditation exercises at specific times, the aim is to bring this living reality into all of life. It is a portable sanctuary that is brought into all we are and do.²

Meditation allows us to internalize and personalize the Word of God in our lives. It invites us to enter the story of God as an active participant—not just as a spectator. Foster proposes that if studying John 14:27 (*my peace I give to you*), “We are no longer worried about how we can make ourselves more at peace, for we are attending to the impartation of peace within our hearts.”³

Meditation is a way of life. As we abide in Christ, the wonder of His creation, the glory of His attributes, and the magnificence of His works and everlasting promises will become evident and will energize our daily living.

Meditation allows us to internalize and personalize the Word of God in our lives. It invites us to enter the story of God as an active participant—not just as a spectator.

Prayer

In Matthew 6:9–13, Jesus gives us a plan to help us pray. It can be summarized by the acrostic ACTS to help you easily remember and apply it to your daily prayer times.

Adoration

Spend time praising the Lord and adoring Him for who He is (Matthew 6:9). For example, we often say, “God, You are so good to me.” Instead, focus on Him and His attributes and say, “God, You are good.” Use scripture or song to praise Him (Psalms 84, 103, 145, 150; Revelation 4:8; 5:12–14).

Confession

Confession should be part of your walk with Christ; it is essential to growth. Invite the Holy Spirit to search your heart and reveal sin to you (Psalm 139:23–24). Let Him show you your wrongdoings and then agree with Him that change must be made. Admit what you have done and acknowledge that it is sin. Let yourself be embraced by your loving Father and His forgiveness and grace (Jeremiah 31:34). Surrender your weakness to Him and His control. Repent and turn away from what you have laid down at the cross, understanding that you are forgiven (1 John 1:9). Through this process, the Spirit shows us the adjustments we need to make in our lives to respond in obedience to God’s revelation.

Thanksgiving

Scripture urges us to maintain a spirit of thanksgiving in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18). In our consumerist world, discontentment comes naturally. Thanksgiving allows us to foster joy in our lives. We can thank God for: who He is (Psalm 48:9), what He has done (Psalm 77:12; 119:27; 143:5; 145:5), His laws and principles (Psalm 1:2; 111:4–8; 119:15,23,97) and His promises (Psalm 119:148).

Supplication

We are called as believers to intercessory prayer (Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 18:1; Colossians 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:1–4). It is a privilege and responsibility to come before the Lord on behalf of others (Hebrews 10:19–25). Supplication helps us turn our worries into prayers. Pray specifically for the needs of those close to you (family, friends, kids, and volunteers in your ministry) and those far from you (global workers, politicians, etc.) in addition to your personal needs. Listening to and praying for others can often bring perspective to our own difficult situations. Write down your prayer requests and record answers to prayer so they can stir your faith and become thanksgiving.

The process of journaling can be overwhelming. Here are some key points to journal:

- Your feelings and experiences.
- God's revealed Word to you.
- Answers to prayer.
- What you need to do or adjust in your life in order to respond in obedience to God's revelation.
- Confession.

Fasting

Fasting is an invitation to all believers to shift our focus from legitimate pleasures and needs, such as food, to God. There are many people in scripture who fasted for various reasons. Daniel (10:3), Esther (4:16), Jesus (Luke 4:2) and Paul (Acts 9:9) fasted to surrender their lives to God, to prepare spiritually for a task ahead, and to pray for the sake of others. Fasting is a humbling act that invites us to put God first, above all of our needs. As you fast, remember the question asked of Zechariah's generation, "When you fasted ... was it really for me that you were fasting?" (Zechariah 7:5). Fasting is a spiritual practice that helps us get closer to the heart of God and His plans for our lives.

Reflect

Reflect on Christ's promise to us in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Read the verse several times, using a few different translations. Write out what you believe this verse is saying. Are there areas of your life where you are dealing with temptation? Take time to talk to God about these challenges and surrender them to Him.

Reflect on the following five other disciplines that bring us closer to God.

1. Simplicity

Read Ecclesiastes 7:29, Matthew 6:25–34, and 1 Timothy 2:2. Reflect on the value of simplicity. How can it help you focus on what really matters?

2. Solitude

Read Matthew 14:13 and 23, Mark 1:35, and Luke 5:16. How can you give attention to your relationship with God through solitude?

3. Submission

Read Mark 8:34–35. Reflect on the freedom that comes from submitting our lives to God on a daily basis.

4. Service

Read Mark 9:35, Galatians 6:2 and James 2:8. How does service help us care for others and share the love of God with them?

5. Worship

Read John 4:23 and 1 Peter 2:5,9. How is your worship a response to divine initiative?

Read Acts 16:25. How can worship bring breakthrough in our lives?

Respond

Take some time alone with only your Bible, a pen, and a notepad. Ask God to create in you an increasing desire to spend time with Him. Simply listen to what the Spirit is saying and write it down.

This week, make a point of focusing on one spiritual discipline and ask God to help you live it out. Expand your focus on one more discipline each week and see how God blesses those who intentionally seek to draw closer to Him. Set an hour aside each day this week to focus on prayer, study, and meditation. Set one day aside this week for fasting. Make sure you take time during that day to practise the other spiritual disciplines as well.

Discuss what you've been experiencing with the children in your church. It will be inspiring for them to see how you are still growing in your relationship with Jesus. Give them simple tools and ideas about how to practise spiritual disciplines so they can begin as well.

End Notes

1. Michelle Anthony, *Spiritual Parenting: An Awakening for Today's Families* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook), 34.
2. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988), 20.
3. Foster, 30.

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Module 6
Session 4

**Raising the Next
Generation of Leaders**

SESSION 4

Raising the Next Generation of Leaders

by Laura Hurlbert-Nickerson

The one question that is heard most often in children's ministry in North America is: "How do I get more help?" The story is often the same. There is no shortage of children, and there is no shortage of curriculum, but there are never enough people to teach them! This is a great crisis and many churches are facing it. Rick Chromey put it this way. "Perhaps the reason we now struggle for adult volunteers (especially among the under forty crowd) is we trained them (through our ministry philosophies of the 1980s and 1990s) to be quiet, sit down, and stay put."¹

The worst part is that we have, by and large, caused our own problem.

We need to start teaching the next generation to be leaders right now! There is no time to wait. George Barna says, "The role of the church (is) to enable people to use their gifts in areas of passion to produce benefits ... that spill over into the home, the marketplace and the church itself."²

If we want people to put their faith into action, and if we want to raise a generation that is not afraid to serve, then we need to start allowing them to serve while they are young.

Read

Is there an age limit to ministry? Did God say that children were to be seen and not heard? Absolutely not! In John 6:1–13, the beloved disciple tells us the story of a little boy and a huge crowd of people. The people were hungry, but they were stranded and had no way to get food. One little boy, however, happened to have a small bit of food. He had only enough to feed himself. Regardless, the boy offered what he had to Jesus. It should have been enough to provide everyone in the crowd with a small crumb—visible only under a microscope. But Jesus fed the ravenously hungry crowd with it. And there was food left over!

That little boy's lunch went a long way! Can you imagine the story he told as he went home that night? "Hey, Mom! You know how you're always telling me to share ..." This little boy saw a need and offered what he had in service to Jesus. This particular story gives us a small glimpse of the value God places on the offerings of children. Children have so much to offer, and children who are given the chance to serve God often grow into youth and adults who continue to serve God. Chromey writes, "...when we challenge and encourage children to master and express their gifts within service to others, we help them grow toward even more significant roles as they get older."³

Children have so much to offer and children who are given the chance to serve grow into youth and adults who continue to serve God.

Children are an essential part of the body of Christ. They have their place in the church just as much as any elder, pastor or other member of the congregation. In fact, children provide a perspective you cannot find anywhere else in the church. Children view faith, God and life in simple, straightforward ways. Adults often struggle to see their world through children's eyes (Hebrews 11:27; 12:2). Faith is easier when you are young.

Children take God at His word and, if allowed, they have a great deal to offer the whole body of Christ. In an age when younger generations are unsure about

the established church, children can revolutionize their world as Jesus becomes their all in all.

When I was a child, my church didn't expect its members to sit down, be quiet or stay put. As I grew, I was able to help out with the younger children, but I was also encouraged to participate in other ways. I sang solos, served meals, handed out pamphlets, participated in church clean-up day, played instruments, helped decorate the church, worked with puppets, and did many other things. I was able to put my faith into practice at an early age. I remind myself of that every time I think of children's ministry. If I didn't think that I belonged or had something good to offer as a child, I don't think I would be sitting in my office writing this session today.

I was allowed to test the waters and discover what my true talents were. As a teenager, other leaders let me lead and sometimes make mistakes. Even when I made mistakes, they still gave me the opportunity to put my faith into action. It is because of their constant faith in my abilities, gifts, and inherent worth as a child—plus the trust they put in my ministry—that I am confident in my gifts, abilities, and worth to God as an adult minister.

The best way to get children involved in ministry is to include the whole family. According to Connie Jeske Crane, "Families who serve together often see powerful changes in their family dynamic and reap all sorts of unexpected benefits."⁴

When we involve children in ministry, we ensure that there will be a strong core of leaders to keep our faith alive. Further, volunteering and encouraging your children to volunteer in different places has lasting benefits. Connecting children to the church at an early age and giving them a sense of ownership, both in the church and in the community, will help guard them from indifference at a later age. The church must provide various avenues for the whole family to volunteer and participate. Anyone can bring many talents and perspectives to the life of the church—children are no exception.

Please note: Most abuse prevention policies require children to be in Grade 6 to start serving and best practices is for them to care for children who are five years younger than them (e.g., age 11 can serve in the kindergarten room and younger).



Reflect

Take some time to reflect on your childhood.

Did you find yourself in a Christian family/home or church during your childhood years?

What place were you given in the church/ministry? How did you feel about your responsibilities?

How has your childhood affected what you are doing right now? What place are children given in ministry within your church?



Respond

Think about the children in your group and try to pinpoint their personal interests. Write down a list of their hobbies, gifts, talents, and personality strengths.

List some volunteering options you could provide for these children to participate in.

Are families volunteering in your local church or community?

If so, what kinds of opportunities are there for this to happen? How could you provide for more?

Identify areas in your current children's ministries program where children can effectively minister. Be sure that you make room for families to work together. Consider drafting a plan to incorporate your findings into your children's ministries programming.

End Notes

1. Rick Chromey, *Energizing Children's Ministry in the Smaller Church* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 2008), 28-29.
2. George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003), 119.
3. Chromey, 81.
4. Connie Jeske Crane, "The Family That Volunteers Together," *Faith Today* (2009): 30.

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BECAUSE WE MUST
PARCE QUE NOUS DEVONS