Children's Ministries

leadership certification course



Semester Two



mission canada

BECAUSE WE MUST



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of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
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First Edition
Printed in Canada
ISBN 978-1-894325-25-7

Photo credits: istock, pp. 7, 39, 73, 103, 139, 165

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You hold in your hands the **Children's Ministries Leadership Certification Course**. This self-study has been 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 this course especially for you, sharing a wealth of experience, information, biblical truths and helpful tips that will expand your thinking and sharpen your skills.

The studies are practical. They focus on some of the key issues in children's ministries that matter most. Feel free to work at your own pace through this course, but stay consistent in your studies. Pause where needed and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart and life about where you are in your studies and service to Him and in your personal walk. Chat with others about what you are learning. Have healthy discussions about the importance of reaching and impacting the next generation.

Each session is laid out in a way that doesn't require excessive time on your part for study purposes, yet gives you opportunity to reflect on and respond to what you are learning.

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 challenges (otherwise known as homework assignments) that will make your study very practical and experiential.

We learn best this way and better retain what we've been taught.

It is the desire of the Mission Canada Children's Guiding Group 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. Thank you for taking the lead … because we must.

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Module 7

Life in the Spirit



Module 7

Session 1

SESSION 1

The Role of the Holy Spirit

by Brad Noel and Natalie Rogge

Whether or not you are an avid traveller, it always seems that when sitting next to a stranger on a plane, the conversation turns to religion and spirituality before you know it. A couple of years ago, I sat next to a lady who was determined to win me over to her thinking on spirituality. I will admit I was very attracted to her enthusiasm, but when we began to get to the core of her beliefs, it was obvious she knew little about true spirituality. When she took a breath, I asked the million dollar question: Have you accepted Christ as your one and only Saviour, and are you living for Him? Her response was loaded! "I live for myself, but I do acknowledge God!"

Many people are interested in spirituality, but few want to anchor themselves in Christ. From movie stars receiving an Oscar to strangers sitting next to you on a plane, many people acknowledge God. Admittedly, most think that is the path to living spiritually. As long as one believes there is a God and acknowledges Him on important holidays, after significant achievements, or in times of real distress—that is considered "spiritual." Unfortunately, in the meantime, actions are often far from words. Admitting there is a God and living for Christ are two very different things.



Read

Outside of salvation, the subject of the Holy Spirit will unequivocally be the most important subject in your ministry. As the role of a parent is crucial to the growth of a child, the role of the Holy Spirit is essential to the spiritual vitality of the next generation of children and teens. For the most part,they have little understanding of the subject of the Holy Spirit, let alone the role He plays in their lives. If we can grasp the role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives—and, subsequently, in our ministry—we will navigate through life and ministry with purpose and raise up a generation

who will live for Jesus in justice and holiness.

What does it mean to be spiritual?

We often think of spirituality in terms of:

- Great altar experiences
- People used in the gifts of the Spirit
- People used in public ministries

Actually, while one may have these experiences, they are not accurate measures of spirituality. We may have a great altar experience because we struggle to maintain a consistent Christian walk and God graciously touches our life. Operating in the gifts of the Spirit is based on what God has chosen to give us (see 1 Corinthians 12) and our obedience in using that gift. Subjective experience is not the best measure of true spirituality.

In Scripture, a spiritual person is someone whose life is shaped by the Spirit. To be spiritual, therefore, means to be of the Holy Spirit. We often limit the Spirit in our lives, and even in our churches or denominations. Pentecostals may limit the work of the Spirit in that we think of the Spirit primarily in terms of salvation, speaking in tongues, or healing—but little else. What we teach regarding His role in other areas of the believer's life is lacking. When we are living a life that is holy and righteous before God, He can trust us with responsibilities and even gifts.

The Holy Spirit testifies that we are Christians

Romans 8:15–16 says:
"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

Although we may not always feel saved, it is the Holy Spirit who testifies that we are indeed children of God. A truly spiritual person does not walk by sight—or feelings—but by faith. On days when the heavens feel like brass and our prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling back at us, it is the Holy Spirit inside us who gives quiet but unmistakable assurance that we belong to God.

The Holy Spirit helps us live by grace

Ezekiel 36:26–27 says:
"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my

Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

The Christian life cannot be lived as a set of legalistic do's and don'ts, but rather in response to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Are there still absolutes in Scripture—things that are always right or always wrong—for everyone, everywhere? Absolutely! It is always wrong to engage in sex outside of marriage, for example. It is always right to love your neighbour and to worship God alone. But we also recognize that there are decisions we must make that are not as clear-cut. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to help us decide what is appropriate—the things we see, read, and listen to; the friends we spend time with; and the places we go.

The Holy Spirit helps us kill the sinful nature

Romans 8:12–13 says:
"Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live…"

We cannot be holy apart from the Spirit, who is holy. Too often we attempt to fix our lives in our own power when we need the assistance of the Spirit to put our sin nature to death. At its core, sin is not an issue of self-control or will power. It is a spiritual issue that needs a spiritual solution. Our struggles against sin in our own power will result in just that—struggles. Involving the Holy Spirit, however, will bring the change that God desires in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is our teacher

John 14:25–26 says:
"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

It is important to understand that we cannot know God's will for our lives apart from the coaching of the Spirit. Further, it is difficult even to understand the Bible—God's Word to us—without the Spirit. Many of us have struggled when trying to read and understand Shakespeare. It would be wonderful if we could send him a text message and say, "What did you mean when you said this?" But, alas, he has been dead for hundreds of years. With the Bible, however, you have the One who

inspired the authors actually living inside of you! The Spirit inspired those who wrote the 66 books of the Bible. So whenever you are having a hard time understanding what is meant in one verse or another, simply ask the Spirit! But you will also need to wait and listen carefully.

The Holy Spirit Empowers us to witness through the baptism of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8 says:
"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Many Christians struggle to share Christ with the unsaved. The Holy Spirit gives us the courage we may not naturally find within ourselves. Remember, the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not that we speak in tongues. Too often, people have talked about the baptism in terms of "getting tongues." Please do not misunderstand. Speaking in tongues is a wonderful sign that God gives us when we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. However, speaking in tongues is not the purpose of spirit baptism—receiving the boldness and courage to witness for Christ is.

The Holy Spirit helps us to pray

Romans 8:26–27 says:
"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."

There are times we do not know what or how to pray, but the Spirit will enable us to pray via the gift of tongues that we receive when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is one of the wonderful benefits of this gift that God gives. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray in a language we have never learned. And the words the Holy Spirit gives to us will be according to God's will for the situation we are concerned about! What could be better?

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to build up the body of Christ

First Corinthians 12:7–11 says:
"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common

good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as He determines."

One of the ways God teaches us that we need one another is by the gifts of the Spirit. God will strengthen other members of Christ's body through our willingness to allow the gifts to flow through us. Too often, as the mentality of the world has crept into the church, we see individuality as a prized possession among God's people. The Bible, however, does not share this point of view. It teaches that individuals in the body of Christ need one another—so much so that God has chosen these gifts for mutual edification. When these gifts are used properly, the Spirit of God flows through one person to encourage and edify others. As we are willing to be used by God in this area, He blesses and encourages others around us. As others are willing to be used, we are also encouraged and blessed! We need one another.

The Holy Spirit produces His fruit in the lives of believers

Galatians 5:22–25 says:
"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Contrary to the teaching of some, the measure of spirituality in the New Testament is not the gifts, but the fruit of the Spirit. As we walk faithfully with God, living in the Spirit, He will produce His fruit—which is essentially the characteristics of God Himself—in our lives. The gifts of the Spirit operate through us in a moment of time and are more dependent upon our availability and obedience than our spirituality. The fruit of the Spirit, however, takes time to develop as we faithfully and consistently walk in relationship with God.

Finally …

Galatians 5:25 says: *"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."*

Paul assumes in this verse that we are already living by the Spirit since we are followers of Christ. He introduces another layer to this, however, when he suggests that we should not only live by the Spirit, but also keep in step with the Spirit! Paul indicates that it is possible to live in the Spirit but not keep in step with Him. Surely, we would want to do both! What is the Holy Spirit trying to do in your life that is new and fresh? In your family? In your church? In your town? In your province? Are you keeping in step with what He wants to do?



Without writing it down, think of how many different emotions you have experienced in the last 24 hours. Have you allowed them to govern your day? Was there an instance when you asked God to help you with your emotion? Did you overcome it? If so, how? Write down some practical ways you can overcome your feelings and live by faith, allowing the Spirit to have control of your thoughts and emotions.

Do you have a "self-help" type of personality? Can you recall a past situation in your life where you have tried to fix things without the help of the Holy Spirit? How did it make you feel?

Reflect on John 14:25–26 where Scripture clearly states that the Holy Spirit will teach you all things. Describe some times in life when you were aware that the Holy Spirit was your teacher. What did you learn and how was it beneficial?

What does it mean to be holy and righteous? Do a search for the word "righteousness" and journal ten different characteristics of what it means to be a righteous follower of Christ. Take time to examine your own life and see how you measure up. Is the Spirit evident to others through your daily actions?

Think about the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Write down some examples that have been noticeable in your life recently. Also, think about some ways you can grow in areas where you may be lacking.

Respond

Journal some reflections on the following questions:

1. If you were interviewing individuals for your church's leadership team, what are some signs you would look for in a person who is being led by the Spirit?
2. If a committee was interviewing you for a ministry position, what would they see and hear that would be evidence of the Spirit at work in your life?
3. Do you feel you have a good grasp on the role of the Holy Spirit in your life and ministry? How can you grow in this area?
4. Without looking back on the content of this session, write down seven points that you would clearly communicate to a group of 10-year-olds if you were teaching them a lesson on the importance of the Spirit.

notes

Module 7

Session 2

SESSION 2

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

by Brad Noel and Natalie Rogge

Personal Stories

Boy—age 15

I remember the moment it happened! I was standing at an altar for what seemed like eternity, crying out to God for something I knew very little about. I have observed it many times, but watching it seemed much easier than trying to "get" it. I had a person at each ear; one was saying, "Press in" and the other was saying, "Let go." I felt like I was on a roller coaster. I was physically tired and emotionally drained from trying so hard. At the very moment I wanted to give up, my youth pastor walked quietly over to me, pushed in past everyone, and whispered in my ear, "You don't have to try hard; just worship Him." In that moment, I stopped talking and began to worship God … and it happened!

Girl—age 16

For me, it was one of those youth camp experiences that so many teenagers share. I was 16 years old, and I stood at the altar surrounded by friends who laid their hands on me and prayed on my behalf. I am not sure how long it took, but I do remember that it was a very emotional experience. I know it is not that way for everyone, but I am an emotional person and that was part of what I experienced that night as I began to speak in tongues. I have to admit that, at first, it was sort of a relief that I had finally experienced this "rite of passage," so to speak. Everyone was very congratulatory and excited for me. It wasn't until later years that I realized the power of speaking in tongues and how it drew me so deeply into the presence of God. It was not something I could manufacture on my own. Today, I find that the gift of speaking in tongues helps me communicate with God on a level that my own words cannot.

Youth pastor—age 33

How many times have I prayed with teenagers at an altar and got the

same response? “I just can’t get it!” Understanding what the Bible says about the baptism of the Holy Spirit helps, but equally important is explaining it to them in their terms. Speaking on the subject to children and teens is vital. Giving the biblical context for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, even in brief, can calm the individual and refocus them on worshipping God.



Read

If we were to interview a number of people about their experience, their stories would be vastly different. Some would have experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit at a children’s or youth event; others, at home. Some would tell us that it took very little time, but others would say it took an hour, a year or many years. There is no real formula for receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but the Bible tells us it is a gift from God for all believers who ask.

Navigating children and teens through this experience is very important. What is even more important is that we understand it from a biblical context. Having an experience around an altar without explaining it from God’s Word can be very confusing. This study will provide a well-rounded and solid understanding of this topic that will help us as we minister to the next generation.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is God.
- He is the third person of the Trinity.
- He was sent by Jesus to be with and to empower Christians after Jesus ascended to heaven.

When do we receive the Holy Spirit into our lives?

This happens in two steps:

First, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us when we become a Christian. That is what makes us a Christian (Romans 8:9). Second, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come upon us and baptize us, resulting in power to witness (Acts 1:8).

Let’s look at three examples in the Bible where believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit:

Acts 2: The Initial Outpouring

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit blows in and baptizes everyone in the upper room. The first truly Christian sermon began with a stout denial that the disciples were drunk! Everyone who was baptized spoke in a language they had not learned as a sign that they were now Spirit-baptized and empowered for witness. Notice the change in Peter! This is the purpose of the baptism: to give believers power to witness so the world would know the good news of Christ. It is not for personal comfort, or to speak in tongues or a badge of spirituality!

> *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8).

Acts 10: The Evidence of Cornelius

As in Acts 2, this passage notes the gift of tongues as the initial evidence that the Spirit had been poured out on the house of Cornelius.

> *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God* (Acts 10:44–46).

Acts 19: The Ephesian Disciples

Once again, as in Acts 2, Luke notes that the Holy Spirit's being poured out results immediately in tongues speech.

> *While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied* (Acts 19:1–2,6).

Defining the baptism of the Holy Spirit

In each situation, the sign God gave to show the believers they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit was the gift of tongues or speaking in unknown languages.

- The baptism gives power to witness that Jesus is the Christ.
- The baptism gives greater boldness and courage when telling others about Jesus.
- The baptism is accompanied by a new prayer language–we pray

in a language we have not learned as the Spirit enables us.
- It is not about "getting tongues."
- It is not a badge of spirituality.
- It does not mean you have "arrived."
- It does not mean that you are any better than someone who has not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

When teaching children about the baptism, answer the questions they have with clarity and accuracy. It is most important that we fully understand and agree with what the Bible says before we can instruct the next generation.

How do you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
- Understand that this gift is for you.
- Hunger for everything God has for you.
- Realize that you need power to witness effectively for Jesus.
- Ask Jesus to baptize you.
- Believe that He will do it.
- Worship Jesus.
- Speak the language He gives you. God won't move your mouth, but when you speak, the language of the Spirit will flow from deep within.

Why do we sometimes have to wait?
- We do not have to wait as the disciples did for the initial outpouring of the Spirit. Yet some individuals have to wait awhile. When we are waiting, we are simply moving ourselves toward a place of hunger and surrender to the Lord. We are not waiting for more of Him; He is waiting for more of us!

What are some obstacles to receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
- Expecting an earth-shattering experience and none happens.
- Tongues sound strange—Satan tells us it is all in our heads.
- Fear of embarrassment (1 Corinthians 14:32–33).
- Fear of the Holy Spirit; being uncertain of what to expect as we surrender to Him and He comes upon us.

Why is the gift of tongues given as the outward physical evidence of Spirit baptism?
- It is an external evidence for the believer and for others.
- It shows no favouritism—it does not matter whether one is rich or

poor, educated or not.
- It is the surrender to God of the believer's tongue, which the Book of James claims is full of deadly poison (James 3:8).

Can you be baptized in the Spirit and not speak in tongues?
- While Scripture does not say you must speak in tongues as evidence of Spirit baptism, in every instance in the Book of Acts where evidence is given, tongues are indicated. Thus, we normally expect one to speak in tongues when baptized in the Spirit.

What if you were baptized and are no longer able to use your gift?
- We must ask God to refresh our gift. Like water that stops running and becomes stale, so the river of God must be kept fresh by use. God never intended our prayer language to be a one-use thing.

Has one "arrived" when baptized in the Spirit?
- Hardly! One has just arrived at the starting line with the strength to run the race. Salvation puts you in the race and the baptism gives you the power to run it well.

Are tongues a real language?
- The tongues spoken in Acts 2:5–11 were known languages recognized by foreigners who had been staying in Jerusalem. Paul indicates that tongues may be the languages of men and angels (1 Corinthians 13:1). Scripture supports both.

Where does the language we did not learn come from?
- God does not make us speak; we must speak. When we do, we will find that a language other than English is pouring out of our mouths. The words come from deep within. It is a language given to you by the Holy Spirit. While this may seem odd at first, it is an amazing testimony of God's presence within us.

Do Christians who don't believe in being baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking with tongues still have the Holy Spirit?
- Of course! All Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside. That is what makes someone a Christian. We believe that God also wants to baptize us in the Spirit. This is an additional experience that gives increased power and boldness for witnessing.

Remember, we all need to ask God to baptize us in the Holy Spirit. Our students need to know the blessing of Spirit baptism. We must teach them to understand this gift of God—that God loves them and wants to be a part of their lives, no matter their age. We need all the power God has for us to witness!

Reflect

What is your personal story? Is the baptism of the Holy Spirit something you have already experienced? Is it something you are anxiously anticipating? Or do you struggle with this subject? What have you learned through this study? Has it changed the way you think about the person of the Holy Spirit and the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit?

If you have further questions, we recommend that you speak with your pastor. Never be embarrassed to ask when you do not understand something in God's Word. That is why we have teachers and spiritual leaders even above us.

Respond

Journal about the following situations.

Scenario: You have just spoken on the baptism of the Holy Spirit with a group of 11- and 12-year-olds. Several students have received the baptism. Later, one confused student approaches you and tells you that they have been trying very hard to receive but are very discouraged. How would you respond?

Scenario: At the same altar another student approaches you to tell you that they have received their baptism and are ready to take their school by storm, sharing about the Good News of Jesus Christ. How would you guide them with this newfound passion?

Scenario: In the same service, an unchurched student approaches you, knowing nothing about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They are very confused and afraid of what they are seeing around the altar. How would you respond?

notes

Module 7

Session 3

SESSION 3

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

by Brad Noel and Natalie Rogge

If students could snap their fingers and be endowed with some biblical gift, which one do you think it would be? I would guess that more than half would not choose the fruit of the Spirit. It is easier to sensationalize a gift of the Spirit rather than a fruit of the Spirit. I mean, how cool is it to be kind to someone? How utterly amazing is it to have patience with people? But if you can prophesy the future or heal the sick—now that can draw a crowd!

I invited a Christian rock band to lead worship at a youth weekend I was directing some years ago. When they arrived, the leader of the band wanted to meet with me alone. He proceeded to tell me that he felt he was meant to be there to speak into the lives of certain individuals. As a matter of fact, he even knew what he had to say. Multiple red flags were raised. My response was simply, "We'll see." That's all I said!

Hours later, as we were setting up for the weekend, I watched this same man join my leaders to set up chairs. Later, he was in the prayer room praying with our prayer team. Just before the event started, he was weeping with a girl whose parents had just gone through a divorce. I approached him five minutes before he went onto the stage and whispered in his ear, "Now you can speak into my kids' lives."

How many people have you met who claim to be spiritual? There is your first red flag. They can quote Scripture like running water, yet their lives are filled with legalism and negativity. They demand authority but do not live humbly. They speak accusations to a lost generation, yet they are not gentle nor do they evidence peace. They preach love passionately but do not live love behind closed doors. Their mouths are perpendicular to their actions. The evidence of true spirituality is not whether or not you can quote Scripture! True spirituality is evidenced by whether or not you have the character of Christ. Some of the most spiritual people I have ever met simply love others. They have no claim to fame, nor do they want it. They

simply live out the love of Jesus wherever they are.

Living out the character of Jesus can be messy. It demands involvement! To live out the fruit of the Spirit is to know the One who gives this fruit. There are no back doors; you cannot fake it. In reality, to know Jesus is to live out the fruit of the Spirit among raw humanity. You cannot coat it with something else. It is raw! It takes discipline; it doesn't happen overnight. Loving others, having joy, being kind, exuding goodness, being faithful, having a gentle spirit, and being self-controlled cannot be done from a distance. It's either in or out.



Read

The Fruit of the Spirit in the Lives of Believers

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22–25).

These qualities describe the nature of God. They will grow naturally as we cultivate our relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. Growing fruit is a natural process which occurs slowly, unlike things which can be made or created overnight. The growth process cannot be counterfeited. As an apple tree naturally produces apples, so the Spirit will naturally produce this fruit. An apple tree cannot grow anything but apples. In the same way, a Spirit-filled Christian should be unable to produce anything other than the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is as supernatural as the gifts. The fruit is not about improving one's natural character. It is change that is produced supernaturally by God. There is as much power in the fruit of the Spirit as there is in the other gifts. These are all things that the Spirit does in us and God will give us the strength that we need to grow and bear fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit is the true measure of spirituality! Why, then, are we so often fascinated by the gifts and think so little of the fruit? If we had a choice between being able to work miracles and excelling in goodness, which would we choose?

The following brief look at the nine fruit of the Spirit highlights the essential meaning of each.

Love

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:4–7).

Love is the character of God. "God is love," says 1 John 4:16b. The Greek *agape* denotes loving dedication. This is the word the New Testament uses to describe God's love. This is the major characteristic being developed as we grow in love.

Joy

Joy is not happiness. Happiness is circumstantial; joy is eternal. We are happy when life goes our way and things work in our favour. We can have the joy of the Lord regardless of our circumstances in life.

Joy is not tied to blessings or feelings. Nehemiah said, *"This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Nehemiah 8:10).

Peace

God is called "the God of peace" in Romans 16:20. We often leave our best material possessions to our loved ones. Jesus left His peace for His disciples: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"* (John 14:27). We can have peace beyond the knowledge of sins forgiven. We can live in peace!

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Kindness

"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light" (Colossians 1:10).

Patience
God is patient (1 Timothy 1:15–16).

Goodness
"Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God ..." (1 Peter 2:12).

We are called to goodness. We can look at this in two ways.

1. We are called to passive goodness. We are the salt of the earth. We have a preserving quality.
2. We are also called to active goodness—doing good works for others.

Faithfulness
God is faithful to us (1 Corinthians 1:8–9). God expects us to be faithful to Him: *"Jesus replied, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God' "* (Luke 9:62). We are to be faithful to each other: "*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms*" (1 Peter 4:10).

Gentleness/Meekness
"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

"By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you ..." (2 Corinthians 10:1).

The Lord is gentle (Isaiah 40:10–11). It takes very strong character to be gentle! It is not the same as weakness.

Meekness is inward; gentleness is outward. We act gently and kindly out of a meek and humble spirit. It cannot be faked—that is hypocrisy.

Self-control
Self-control is not the same as natural self-discipline; it is discipline from the Spirit. Self-control is abstaining from fleshly lusts: "*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful*

desires, which war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Self-control means being mastered by nothing: " '*Everything is permissable for me'—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissable for me'—but I will not be mastered by anything*" (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Self-control means having control over your tongue. "*We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check*" (James 3:2).

Reflect

Take time to read and meditate on John 15:1–8. Journal all insights regarding the importance of fruitfulness and developing fruit that lasts. Reflect on your own strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the fruit that is evident in your own life and ministry. Journal ways you can strengthen your weaknesses and bear more fruit.

Respond

Create an outline for a nine-week teaching series for children on the fruit of the Spirit focusing on one each week. Choose either a preschool or elementary age level for your focus. Be sure to answer the questions who, what, why, where, when and how in your outline so your students can successfully incorporate and live out all the fruit of the Spirit in their lives and through their daily actions.

Module 7

Session 4

SESSION 4

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

by Brad Noel and Natalie Rogge

It was 15 years ago, and it was the first and only time I have ever operated in the gift of healing. She was a young teenager, and I was her chaperone at a youth event—and only a teenager myself! For years she had an injury to her leg that made it necessary to walk with the use of a cane. One night we were praying with her. Something within my spirit upped the ante, and I just knew that a different level had been reached. I sensed the Spirit of God powerfully encouraging me to tell her to drop her cane and raise both arms high. She raised one hand while clinging tightly to the cane with her other. Again, as we prayed, I felt the Lord speaking through me as I told her in a calm but sure voice to "drop the cane."

It was a moment I will never forget. The cane rattled to the ground as she cried out to God for her healing while I prayed. Within just a few moments, she became almost completely hysterical. She began to move, walk and jump around that altar! We stood back and watched her, amazed, crying out prayers of thanksgiving to God for His miraculous work.

Read

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to build up the body of Christ

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of

tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines" (1 Corinthians 12:7–11).

Also read 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:6–8.

Understanding the Gifts

The gifts of the Spirit are given by God, in part to emphasize our need for one another. God will release a gift through one willing believer to edify and build up the other believers present. Some gifts seem to reside within us. In others, we are used in a temporary fashion. For example, we may speak of possessing the gift of leadership, but not the working of miracles. We often do not possess these gifts; rather, they flow through us as God determines. That is not to say, however, that some individuals cannot be used often in one or more of the gifts. God seems to choose some believers to release one or more gifts of the Spirit on a regular basis.

The gifts *are*:

- Gifts of grace (*charismata*), which means they are unearned or undeserved.
- Meant to edify and build up.
- For the entire body.
- Released through one believer for another.
- Temporary, yet some may be more permanent.
- To be eagerly sought.
- Subject to the wisdom and guidance of spiritual leaders.

The gifts *are not*:

- For individual blessing per se; their primary purpose is to bless others.
- Meant to correct individuals. The Word of God does that. Second Timothy 3:16–17 informs us that Scripture is God-breathed and will teach us, rebuke us, correct us, and train us for right living.
- Badges of spirituality. The very idea of their being "charismata" (gifts of grace) indicates that they are undeserved. The New Testament manner of measuring spirituality is always by the fruit—never by the gifts of the Spirit.

The New Testament Spiritual Gifts in Action

The gifts of the Spirit are distinctly visible. Here are some examples of

what they may look like:

- A young child dies tragically and is raised back to life.
- Someone gives clear direction in hiring church staff.
- A businessperson is given spiritual counsel in a big decision.
- A young person seeking direction is pointed in the correct way to proceed.
- The town drunk is delivered by someone with a word from God.

The Gifts of the Spirit Defined

There are several lists of spiritual gifts in Scripture; none of which is exhaustive. We will examine the 1 Corinthians 12 list. We can interpret the nine gifts into three categories:

1. *Insight* gifts: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discernment
2. *Action* gifts: gifts of healing, works of power, faith
3. *Speaking* gifts: tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy

Below you will find a brief definition of each gift and a scriptural example. Each gift demonstrates how a believer is specially used or empowered by God for a specific situation or need.

Wisdom

Wisdom is knowing what to do in a given situation. For example, when the widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food, the twelve apostles choose seven people to oversee the task so they could devote themselves to prayer and the Word (Acts 6:3).

Knowledge

This describes knowing the facts about a situation by the Spirit. For example, Peter was given supernatural knowledge of the true intentions of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10).

Discernment

Discernment is the ability to distinguish between things that are of God and those that are of Satan. When Paul was followed by a slave girl announcing they were servants of God, he knew her that knowledge came from a malignant spirit. He cast it out. He was able to see through the demonic “angel of light” (Acts 16:16–18).

Healing

Receiving a gift of healing means being delivered from illness. People frequently received gifts of healings in Acts. Some were even healed by

God when Peter's shadow fell on them (Acts 5:15–16).

Miracles

These are literally works of power manifesting incredible miracles for His glory. In Acts, Peter raises Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:40–42).

Faith

This is the gift of having extraordinary faith in God to move or act. This is different from saving faith, which is given to all believers. This is a special gift, given for specific situations. In faith, Peter healed the crippled beggar at the temple gate (Acts 3:1–10).

Speaking in Tongues

This is bringing a message to the body of Christ in an unlearned language. This gift is a sign for unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22) but must be accompanied by the next gift—the interpretation of the message. The believers in Corinth were using the spoken gifts with great enthusiasm. They needed to understand, however, that the gift of tongues had to be used by individuals in an orderly manner to avoid confusion (1 Corinthians 14:26–27).

Interpretation

The interpretation of tongues communicates the essential essence of the message in tongues. This gift should accompany the gift of tongues so that people can receive the benefit of the message in the unknown language.

The gatherings of the believers in Corinth were often chaotic, with many individuals speaking in tongues at the same time. Paul encouraged them to speak one at a time. The person delivering the message in tongues should pray for the interpretation, or a person having the gift of interpretation should share the essence of the message in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:13,27–28).

Prophecy

Prophecy is speaking to individuals or to the church for "strengthening, encouragement or comfort." This communication may involve both forthtelling (insight as to how the church should live) and foretelling (insight into the future). For example, in Acts 21:10–11, Agabus predicts Paul's arrest in Jerusalem.

Questions About the Gifts of the Spirit

Do I have any control over the gift as God gives it to me?

Yes and no! We don't have any say over which gift God will give us, though Paul does tell us to pray for gifts that build up the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:1,4). When God does move through us in one of the gifts, however, we have control over how and when it is delivered. Paul taught, *"The spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of prophets"* (1 Corinthians 14:32). In other words, what is happening by the Spirit within us is subject to our control. The church at Corinth misunderstood the use of the gifts—everyone was speaking aloud at the same time, causing more confusion than edification. Paul taught them to control when and how they shared the gift. We control when we share the gift God has given us. We seek God's direction and discernment to determine how He would have us use the gift He has given. We seek to share for His glory and the encouragement of others.

Are all of the gifts for today?

Yes. Some argue that only the gifts such as helping others, administration or leadership are given for today while the more miraculous gifts such as the working of miracles or prophecy have ceased. Scripture does not support this view. There is nothing to indicate that God has ceased giving the more spectacular gifts to the church in this day. Remember, however, that though some of these gifts grab our human attention, it is not more spiritual to operate in the miraculous than it is to have the gift of administration. We should not put any of the gifts on any kind of pedestal over any of the others. All gifts are given by grace and are undeserved by their very nature.

Should I be moving in all of the gifts?

Not likely. Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 12:29–30 seem to indicate that no one person will be given all of the gifts. God gives His gifts as He chooses to whomever He chooses. We are not to be stressed or upset if we are not given one or more of the gifts we would like. Again, the key here is availability!

How do I tell whether or not it is God speaking to me or whether it is my imagination?

None of us wants to exercise one of the gifts in our assembly, only to discover that it wasn't God. We learn to hear and understand God's voice in the same way we learn the voices of others—through constant practice. The first time a friend calls on the phone, we may have to

ask, “Who is calling, please?” By the time you have chatted 200 times, however, you will recognize their voice. Through constant conversation with God, His voice will become as recognizable to us as that of our closest friend.

What role does the pastor have in giving leadership to the use of the gifts?

First Corinthians 14 teaches us that pastors or other spiritual leadership can play a great role in the exercising of the gifts. This chapter describes the importance of maintaining order within our services: “*For God is not a God of disorder but of peace*” (14:33a). Pastors can help maintain this order. They can also assist in discerning whether or not a gift is genuine. A pastor’s knowledge of Scripture and experience can help you to be discerning in this area.

Reflect

Take a few moments to reflect on times when you have seen the gifts of the Spirit in operation.

- How did you feel?
- Did you understand what was happening?
- Had you spent time prior to these occasions reading what the Bible says about the various gifts and how they operate?
- Was it a positive and uplifting experience for you, or did it feel awkward and confusing? Why?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 again in a few different versions. Take note of the different ways that each gift is explained. Again, reflect on your life. Have there been times when God has given you one or more of these gifts for His purpose and you didn’t recognize it? We must not neglect to recognize the gifts God gives us, but we must remain humble. Only then can we use the gifts God gives us for His purposes and draw people to Him.

Respond

Take time to honestly and personally respond to the following questions, journaling your thoughts and answers:

There seems to be confusion amongst believers concerning the gifts of the Spirit. For many, these gifts seem to be obscure rarities that are unreachable by the common person. Have you ever felt this way?

How can you begin to grow personally in your understanding of the gifts and your activity in them?

How can you help dispel the myth that spiritual gifts only involve such things as prophecy and tongues? (See Romans 12:6–8).

Have you ever completed any form of spiritual gift questionnaire? There are many great resources available for this. It can be a very eye-opening experience. You might want to consider doing one yourself and then implementing it with members of your leadership team or Bible study group.

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Module 8

Teaching Strategies



Module 8
Session 1

SESSION 1

Teaching as Jesus Taught

by Natalie Rogge

Who was the best teacher you ever had? What was it about them that put them at the top of your list? A study out of the University of California determined some very interesting statistics about teachers. Only 7% of what a student receives comes from the words or text of what is being communicated. How a teacher or speaker sounds communicates 38% of their message (inflection, tone, voice variety, emphasis and energy). What the listener sees carries 55% of the message. If this is truly the case, the individual carrying the message to be communicated is of utmost importance—sometimes even more important than the actual curriculum being used.

Consider a teacher you may have had who really didn't make an impact on you while you were in their class. What was it about them that made you disinterested or disengaged? Were they teaching something they had read the night before from a textbook or a teaching manual, or was their subject matter truly engraved on their heart? Were they passionate about the subject, or was it just a job and a paycheque that caused them to do what they were doing?

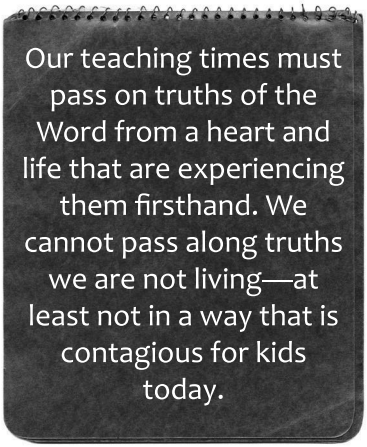
There is a difference.

Do we really own the message we are communicating, or is it just a lesson being read from the pages of our latest curriculum series? Have the principles of the stories we share been lived out in our own lives so we aren't relating secondhand information or something that doesn't seem relevant? We must own what we are passing on to the next generation or else they will see a faith that is not contagious or real enough for them to get excited about possessing themselves.

Jesus spoke to His disciples and all who would listen as One with authority. He was sent by His Father to communicate His story. It wasn't

a secondhand story. He was living it out. Jesus taught as One who had authority (Matthew 7:28-29). Luke 4:31-32 speaks of how the crowds in Galilee were amazed at His teaching because His message had authority. Jesus' teaching focused on truths that were powerful, yet it was His life and His actions that caused people to watch and take notice of who He was. Jesus wasn't like other teachers. He was exceptional. He stood out in the crowd and was noticed. He owned the story.

Parents, teachers, leaders, and others who shape the spiritual state of the next generation of children have a tremendous responsibility. It's more than randomly choosing a curriculum because it may be the latest and greatest on the market, or because it has the best videos or requires the least number of leaders and less preparation time. Our teaching times must pass on truths of the Word from a heart and life that are experiencing them firsthand. We cannot pass along truths we are not living—at least, not in a way that is contagious for kids today.



Read

As teachers or those who seek to impact a generation of children in their spiritual walk with Jesus, we must always consider who our audience is: how they think, how they act, how they react, and how they learn best. Jesus was a master teacher; our goal should be to learn all that we can from His example. The relevance of Jesus' life was not limited to the times He spent walking this earth. If we believe His Word is still relevant for life today, then we must also believe that the ways in which He communicated are still effective. You may or may not agree, but let's unpack what that means in light of how Jesus communicated the gospel.

Types of Students

In her book *How Jesus Taught*,[1] Regina M. Alfonso describes Jesus' techniques and goals as a teacher and how He shifted His techniques according to the type of student who was before Him. Alfonso lists at least eleven different types of students that Jesus would have taught:

- The insecure student (John 5:1-18)
- The experimenter (Matthew 14:28–33)
- The eager student (Mark 10:17–21)
- The discouraged student (Luke 24:13–35)
- The humiliated student (John 8:1–11)
- The masked student (John 4:1-30)
- The persevering searcher (Luke 15:1–10)
- The unpopular, unaccepted student (Matthew 8:1–4)
- The gifted student (John 3:1-12)
- The crafty student (Luke 19:1–9)
- The shy student (Mark 5:25–34)

Jesus needed to alter His techniques and objectives to influence His audience effectively. We must do the same.

What Jesus Did

Jesus worked hard to do four things:

1. He built relationships.
2. He communicated/taught out of a heart of love.
3. He challenged people in their faith and obedience.
4. He instilled boldness.

These points are simple and very achievable, even today. Students will struggle to listen to us if we have not first developed a relationship with them. Just as Jesus loves all people, so must we. As a teacher, there may be certain children you prefer having in your classes; however, those who are unloved or sometimes difficult need to hear your teaching just the same … or maybe more. Christ called His followers to a place of obedience. They were called to a high standard. He expected much yet didn't always receive it. He asked them to pray but found them sound asleep! Disappointment may come as we teach, but we must follow Christ's example of not giving up in the process. The power with which He taught and His Spirit at work caused a boldness to rise up in even the humblest of fishermen.

Jesus sent His followers out for "do it yourself" opportunities. He wanted to see if they could demonstrate the boldness to fulfil the "lab test" on their own. If they passed, they were ready. If they failed, it meant more review. Jesus was okay with watching the disciples fail at something. It was practice for the time when they would be on their own, without Him around to fall back on. In our times of Christian education, we must allow

our students to fail and to practise. We must release them to do the work of the Father while they are learning and we are teaching—not when we are no longer around to help them through the challenges they may face. We must rejoice with them in their successes and hold them accountable to practising their faith in very real ways. Something as simple as an opportunity where we share aloud, in a classroom setting, our testimony of how we accepted Jesus can take away years of fear that often paralyze us as teens and adults.

Discovery Learning

One of the great ways Jesus communicated was by allowing people to think for themselves so they could discover the truth and own it. Discovery learning is an inquiry based instruction. As you well know, children are full of questions—even from the time they are just learning to form sentences.

Like Jesus, we can be very effective in our communication when we allow the learner to draw on his or her own experience and prior knowledge, and to ask questions freely and openly at the time the thought is going through their head. Jesus used objects like water jugs in His very first miracle to prove His power. He simply handed the jugs to the servants and asked them to fill them with water. The object lessons we use to teach scriptural truth can have such a lasting impact on those who watch. Every time they see that object, they are again reminded of the truth found in God's Word. It is then our opportunity to encourage our students to take the story and retell it over and over again using the very same household and common objects.

As we seek to choose teaching curricula, are we watching for those that are strong on children's discovering God's truths for themselves and then being able to apply these truths to their lives in very practical ways? A Bible lesson without a way to apply it to everyday living can leave children feeling frustrated as they may not yet be able to make the practical application link themselves, depending on their age and stage of development.

Stories

Jesus used parables—simple stories that held years of wisdom for the listener. We all have those same sorts of stories in our lives that can be told. Our Teacher teaches us lessons on a daily basis, but often life is so full that we fail to stop long enough to realize exactly what God might

want us to learn and what the kingdom impact could be. When you wake each morning and give your day to God for His purposes, you will be amazed at the stories of His goodness and learning that will come your way!

Truth in Bite-Size Chunks

With the passing of Kay Kerr, one of our dear and faithful PAOC missionaries, I again realized the power of maxims (short little statements with scriptural truths that are found deep in the hearts of even the young). Kay's 11-year-old grandson, Andrew, stood before me the day after his great-grandmother's passing and began quoting short little snippets of truth that his godly grandmother had quoted for many of the 101 years that she lived, serving her Lord faithfully. Those small statements, full of life and purpose, made their way down four generations and were still being quoted with boldness and life-giving power.

These power-packed lines make the truth unforgettable. We call them proverbs, wise sayings, maxims, adages, sage advice or rules for living. Some have rhyme, rhythm and even some punch to them. Others are weighted heavily in the truth of God's Word. As a teacher, create your own wise sayings, making sure they are based on biblical principles. Quote them to your students regularly, repeat them over and over, and listen carefully because one day someone may just quote your creation back to you! Be sure that your maxims are Bible-based and true to what God is saying in His Word.

Here are a few examples of great maxims—truths wrapped up in sayings—straight from God's Word:

- You are the light of the world.
- No one can serve two masters.
- A tree is recognized by its fruit.
- Out of the overflow of the mouth the heart speaks.

Ask Questions

One of the great ways Jesus taught His followers was simply by asking questions. In fact, Scripture records over 300 of them! His questions exposed sin, they caused people to examine their own lives, they challenged people to think, they brought out information, and they revealed truth.

When teaching children, we can find ourselves asking questions that require simple yes or no answers, thinking they are not able to tackle the thought process required for a deeper and more thought-out response. It is important that we challenge our students with questions that will make them think and will kindle their faith. The sad reality is that once they get to high school and university, those types of questions will be flying in their face endlessly. Children need to be trained and equipped to defend their faith. We must help them formulate their thoughts on what they believe and why at an early age.

Teachable Moments

There is so much we can learn as we consider the many ways and means in which our Master Teacher communicated life-giving lessons and challenges that brought life change. Michael Warden, co-founder of Group Publishing, described it well when he said,

> "[Jesus] was always teaching. I mean, He grabbed teachable moments all the time. But who He was, what He did, how He interacted was always the lesson, whether it was through an experience of washing the disciples' feet or just watching them 'be' – He was teaching. And that's a reminder for all of us: It's not what you do in the classroom. It's who you are out there that will probably be the most powerful lesson."[2]

Choosing Curriculum

As we consider what we are going to teach our students from season to season and from series to series, we must recognize the fact that the greatest syllabus or teaching guide is still God's Word. The Bible must be our instruction book for life. Be sure to select teaching materials in which God's Word is prominent. It's the truth of His Word that sets us free and brings life. We can teach children to have knowledge of His Word but miss the experience of *living* His Word. Remember, what the listener SEES carries 55% of the message. Choose your curriculum wisely, but choose how you live with great wisdom. If you try your best to live like Jesus, you will teach like Him too!



Fond memories flood my mind as I recall my first grade school teacher. I can't recall all the educational skills I learned as a six-year-old who now needed to spend five full days in a classroom setting every week with

a woman who was about to shape my life—for the rest of my life. Daily I sat at her feet and listened intently. I cannot recall all the stories that were shared on those numerous reading afternoons as she sat before me in her rocking chair—not because she was elderly, but because she was a radiant, young and very expectant mother-to-be. The memories I recall most were the smiles in the happy moments, the tears when the mood of the story turned sad, and the expressive and energetic changes in her youthful and exuberant voice as the storyline picked up and then dropped off again. As she read, her actions, her facial expressions, her body language and her mannerisms spoke to my life more loudly than the words of the books ever did. I watched intently.

That was many years ago. But just recently I found myself sitting on the nursery floor at church. As I pulled out a simple story book and began to read aloud, little ones gathered and found themselves upon my knee and at my feet. For a moment I realized I was drawing a little crowd, just like my first grade teacher used to do, and also just like Jesus, our Master and Teacher, did as well. Jesus would pause in the middle of the day's activities and begin to share a parable or set the environment for a miracle to take place. People were listening; they were intent on seeing and hearing what would happen next. Jesus had their attention. They were engaged.

Take some quiet time to reflect on your favourite teacher(s) throughout the years. Journal your thoughts on the following:
What were the things that drew you to them?
What inspired you?
What caused you to learn, to question, to be alert and focused, to engage in the conversations?
How did they help you in your developmental years?
Did they challenge your place of faith? If so, how?

Respond

Take a look into the following Scriptures and study some of the questions Jesus asked, and to whom He addressed them. Why do you think He asked these questions of these people as He did?

1. Matthew 6:27
2. Luke 22:48
3. Matthew 15:3

4. Matthew 9:4
5. Matthew 7:3

In His question in Matthew 6, Jesus caused people to consider the anxiety they bring to their lives by worrying. In Luke, He confronts His betrayer with a question. In Matthew 15, Jesus desires to hold people accountable to His ways over their traditions. In Matthew 9, He wants them to consider why their hearts are holding evil; and in Matthew 7, Jesus wants people to understand that they must not judge one another.

Create three wise sayings/maxims that are each based on something true or on a teaching from God's Word. Make sure they are short, concise and easy to remember. Find opportunities to use them in your teaching times and conversations. Use these opportunities as teachable moments, just as Jesus did.

Choose two different curricula that you are presently using (or have used in the past) at your church. Walk through each curriculum and determine the similarities between the way you would teach using that resource and the way Jesus Himself might have taught. As you consider how Jesus taught, are there parts of those curricula that you would change (e.g., use a different technique to teach the memory verse or Bible lesson or life application story)? What would you do differently and why?

Endnotes

1. Alfonso, Regina M. *How Jesus Taught: The Methods and Techniques of the Master* (Staten Island: Alba, 1986).
2. Warden Michael D. *Results from Ordinary Leaders: Learning to Teach as Jesus Taught* (Loveland: Group, 1998) 162.

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Module 8

Session 2

SESSION 2

Understanding the Bible as One Story

by Natalie Rogge

What is your natural instinct when you respond to questions others ask of you? Are you a detailed responder or a "get it over with and let's move on" type? Does it depend on the topic? If you are more interested in the topic, will you give a more detailed answer? What about those questions that require a biblical or theological answer? When someone asks one of those, do you frantically think, *where is a pastor when I need one?* as you scramble to recall an answer from past Sunday school lessons?

Children ask a lot of questions. Some questions are easier to respond to than others. Some are difficult and may even require you to wait, do a little digging, and come back with an appropriate answer.

Have you ever been asked one of those loaded questions like "How do I know God is real?" or "Why did Jesus have to die?" There is so much to know, so many events, and so many teaching points and principles that we can pass on to our children from God's Word. Sometimes we struggle, thinking we need to provide a detailed answer to satisfy the question. Frequently, we leave no room for self-discovery by our students as they spend time in God's Word.

God's story is simpler than we often make it. Many of us have been taught the Bible in a compartmentalized way, and we tend to pass it on to our students in the same manner. When we focus our teaching on distinct themes, we can neglect to paint the big picture—the "God's big story" picture. We must be able to explain God's story in a way that is easily laid out and understood so we can share it with others. Most people are able to understand a "big picture" well when it's broken down into bite-size pieces, just like those easy to assemble puzzles that you may have done when you were a child! It is no different with God's Word. Your Bible is a "big-picture." It is a compilation of books by various

authors which come together to create one big story … a real story!

One of the keys to teaching children about God's big story is being able to break it down into bite-size pieces that kids can understand. First, though, we must be able to see God's Word in themes that flow from one to another, painting an incredible picture of His relationship with all of humanity.



Read

Sadly, today's children are so bombarded with stories in movies and television that they find it difficult to regard stories like those in the Bible as "true." As you well know, today's kids are growing up in a virtual world. As a consequence, much of what they are familiar with can have little to do with real life. It is critical that we help our students see God's Word as true.

It may sound rather odd to you that we must make the Bible "real" for today's kids, but as teachers of spiritual things, we are communicating to a generation whose world is entrenched in the virtual. So much of their lives revolve around video games where they can be instantly transported in their mind to a world that does not exist. It's not real. The flip side, however, is also true. We live in a world of reality TV shows, instant messaging and texting of real-life situations as they occur, and not a moment later. We can help our students understand God's Word when we put stories and history together; we can also guide them in interpreting biblical events.

When you pick up a book of fiction or a biography, you know it is meant to be read from cover to cover, beginning at the beginning and progressing chapter by chapter to the story's conclusion. The Bible is a little different. Yes, it begins with creation and ends with John's revelation of Jesus' return and the final righting of all wrongs. Yet, between these books, not everything is in sequence chronologically. There are some large-scale time lines that work out. The Old Testament comes before the New—that is fairly straightforward—but things get tricky beyond that. Most of the books were written in a sequence other than what is laid out in the table of contents at the front of a Bible. For example, Paul's earliest letters were likely around for a few decades before the first written Gospel, and even they are arranged from longest (Romans)

to shortest (Philemon). Helping our students grasp the time line for the writing of God's Word is one way of making His story make sense.

As we seek to help others wrap their minds and their hearts around God's big story, there are some words that can summarize large and definitive sections of the Bible. Consider using these to describe the development of God's story. You might even draw simple pictures to show what God was doing in each of these sections. The shortest and simplest breakdown of Scripture could be summed up in the following four words:

CREATION … FALL … CROSS ... ETERNITY

What do you think would be the picture on each page if you handed a six- or seven-year-old four pieces of paper and some crayons? Would you see two people in a garden, then a drawing of an apple with a bite taken out of it, then a drawing of a wooden cross on a hill and, lastly, a picture of Jesus surrounded by a bunch of happy kids? At young ages, children need to grasp the Bible in a way that is easy to picture and understand.

Then, as these same children begin to formulate deeper thinking and understanding in their later elementary years, more depth can be added to God's simple story. Their four-word list, as shown above, could be expanded to be more like the following:

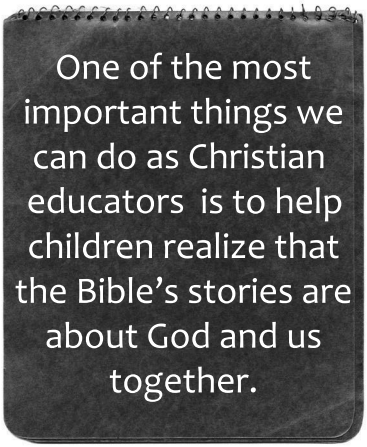
CREATION … FALL … EXODUS … EXILE … CROSS …
THE CHURCH …ETERNITY

In just a few short years, their list of stages in God's big story could almost double in size. Then, as your students develop and their minds are able to handle more complex concepts, explain bigger words like *redemption* and *revelation* in your teaching time. It's always exciting to see the look on a child's face when biblical concepts connect and make sense. For instance, they may know that the last book of the Bible is called "Revelation," but it is also our responsibility to help them see that a revelation is a vision. This will help them understand what the book is—John's vision of the second coming of Christ and his encouragement for believers to stay faithful to Jesus so that we will have a home with Him in the end. As we teach, we must not neglect using words such as *revelation*, *redemption,* or *resurrection*, but it is important that we explain

the true sense of what they mean to our students so that God's Word is not beyond their grasp.

As children grow and develop, their questions deepen and their vocabulary expands. There is great potential for their understanding of God's Word to become increasingly richer—if they are spending time reading it, that is! Now is the time to put even more "meat on the bones." Think for a moment about some other themes that could easily be inserted into the previous seven-word time line for God's big story. What is obvious to you? Do you know where these themes would fit in? Think about this as you read. You will be asked in the "Reflect" section of this session to add a few more words to these seven.

As our children grow, we must be sure that we challenge their thinking on spiritual concepts. Just because they have heard the story of Jonah five times over the years does not mean they don't need to hear it again. As Jesus' followers, we know that we can read a Bible passage several times and find something new each time. Consider the Book of Jonah: the first time a child hears the story, they may *hear* that big fish can swallow little people. That can be scary to a three-year-old! As that child grows, they will discover new truths. They might *hear* that they should listen to God when He speaks to them the first time, that there are consequences to disobedience, or that God doesn't share His love and mercy only with the people we think should have it. Then, as children become preteens, their depth of understanding and faith become greater still. They may find themselves asking questions like "To whom does God want me to take the message of the gospel?"



One of the most important things we can do as Christian educators is to help children realize that the Bible's stories are about God and us together. Everything God did, He did for us because He loves us and wants to be in relationship with us. He wants us to know His salvation. He wants us to follow Him in obedience and make disciples of others. He wants us live in a way that is pleasing to Him. He wants to live as if life

may end tomorrow, and to make the most of every opportunity we have to share His plan and purpose for mankind with all who need to know Him. Teaching children to understand the big picture helps them to see where they fit into God's story.

A beautiful song is sung at Christmas time that simply says, "We're not that far from Bethlehem / Where all our hope and joy began ... " In our world of movies, online videos and video games that capture kids' attention, we must challenge ourselves to lay a firm foundation for our biblical teaching. As our children enter their teenage years and then move on to college or university, there will be countless times when their faith will be challenged. They will be questioned or attacked for what they believe to be true according to God's Word. As parents and teachers of the next generation, we must follow the clear instruction in Deuteronomy 6 that speaks to how we must share faith in all actions and activities of life.

May you see yourself as part of God's big story on a daily basis. May you know how valuable you are to God and see what He has for you to do: to love Him, to serve Him, and to be part of expanding His kingdom by accurately teaching the next generation the truths of God's Word.

Reflect

How, according to God's Word, would you describe creation to an elementary school child? Is that your personal position on the beginning of the world?

Why do you think God's big story has unfolded as it has?

How do you feel that you fit into God's big story?

Is there any part of God's big story that you find hard to grasp? Why do you think that might be?

Draw four simple pictures to depict for a preschool child four simple biblical themes like:

1. Creation
2. The Fall
3. The Cross
4. Eternity.

Reflect on the various themes of the Bible through the eyes of the preschool child and then the elementary child. As that child progresses to their preteen years and their level of understanding increases, the Bible takes on a greater depth of meaning. Write some key points beside each of the following Bible themes that you would want to ensure get taught in a lesson on each theme.

1. Creation:
2. Fall:
3. Exodus:
4. Exile:
5. Cross:
6. The church:
7. Eternity:

What do the words *redemption* and *revelation* mean? How would you describe each of their meanings to an eight-year-old child so they could understand?

The books of the Bible can be divided into literary sections. Using your Bible, list the books that would be found in each of the following categories, beginning in the Old Testament and working through to the end of the New Testament.

- Books of the Teachings:
- Books of History:
- Books of Poetry:
- Major Prophets:
- Minor Prophets:
- Gospels and Acts:
- Paul's Letters:
- General Letters:
- Apocalyptic Writings:

If you were to combine the books of the Old and New Testament together in terms of their themes, the breakdown by category would look more like this:

Foundations:	Genesis to Deuteronomy (the teaching of Moses) and Matthew to Acts (the four Gospels and the birth of the church)
History:	Joshua to Esther
Poetry:	Job to Song of Solomon
Letters:	Romans to Jude

Prophecy: Isaiah to Malachi
Apocalypse: Daniel, Revelation

Respond

How would you answer the questions below that children or parents may direct your way?

1. What is God's big story?
2. Why did Jesus come to earth?
3. Why did Jesus choose to die?
4. How do I become a follower of Jesus?
5. How did the first church begin?
6. What are the responsibilities of a disciple of Jesus?
7. Who is the Holy Spirit?
8. Where do I fit in God's big story?

Consider in your mind your answer for each question. Then take the next step and write down three to five key points that you must communicate in your response if a child were asking you that question.

Now go into a quiet room where you can talk through your response as if you were sharing it directly with your student. Or, if you feel comfortable, ask a friend or family member to listen to your response. Allow them to critique your responses. We learn as we do, and speaking our responses out loud can often help us be better communicators. Practise out loud, sharing the key points of God's big story with others. Do it regularly. Look for opportunities daily to share God's story with those who yet need to believe. Be a disciple who makes disciples.

In real life we don't run in a marathon until we've mastered the treadmill and been around the block more than a few times. We don't consider embarking on a 30-day fast until we know we are physically and mentally able to conquer a day, two days, or even a week. Practice in anything we do only proves to make us better. Practise telling God's big story often—and the reasons behind it. Teach your students to share God's story out loud too.

Module 8

Session 3

SESSION 3

Creative Teaching Methods

by Amber Smith

The goal in teaching a lesson to a group of students is to engage each student so that they not only remember the lesson, but also apply it to their lives. You can effectively accomplish this by using a variety of creative teaching methods such as media, drama and object lessons throughout your lesson. Creativity is a must, if you want to teach in a way that your children will remember, but creativity takes a lot of work!

Typically, when we consider "creative teaching" we are thinking of those extra touches that the truly gifted are seemingly able to pull out of a hat. We think of elaborate schemes and brightly coloured sets, of perfectly executed dramas and intricately designed crafts. But there is more to creativity than performing at your best. We need to recognize that the children we teach are all different; that they come from different places and learn in different ways. We cannot be all things to all people. Being creative in ministry means that we will have to adapt our teaching to reach even those children who learn differently from teaching that we find comfortable.



Read

Adapting to Learning Styles

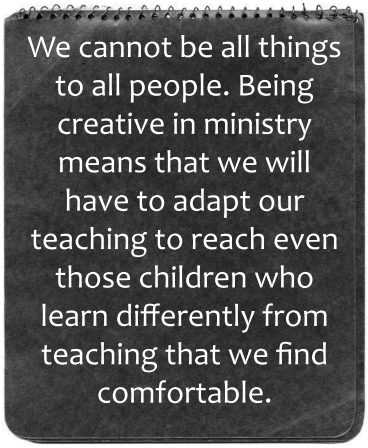
Choosing which creative teaching methods to use in your lesson depends on the types of learners who attend your group. According to *The Discipline Guide for Children's Ministry*,[1] there are four different modes of learning:

1. **Visual learners** need to see the lesson. Examples of creative teaching methods that best appeal to visual learners are reading and writing activities, pictures, multimedia, drama and object lessons.

2. Auditory learners learn by interacting verbally with the material presented in the lesson. Auditory learners do not simply need to hear the lesson. It is important for them to discuss the lesson as well. You can engage auditory learners by having them ask and answer relevant questions, provide their opinion, feedback, or observation, and by providing the opportunity to debate or discuss the lesson with others.

3. Tactual learners, in order to be truly involved in the learning process, require hands-on interaction and an opportunity to become physically engaged in a lesson. Tactual learners learn best from hands-on teaching methods like object lessons that they can personally touch and feel, crafts or hands-on activities, drama and role-playing, and experiments and games.

4. Kinesthetic learners need to practise the lesson in order to retain and internalize what they have learned. The types of creative teaching methods that best engage kinesthetic learners are drama, role-playing, service projects, or any method that allows the student an opportunity to experience what they have learned through involvement.[2]



Every student has a preferred learning style and most likely has a strong secondary preference too. You will very likely have each type of learner present in your group on any given teaching occasion, so the best way to engage every learning style is to combine a variety of creative teaching methods for each lesson component. While there are numerous methods to choose from, this session will focus primarily on the following three: media, drama and object lessons.

Media

Expressed simply, media is the means used to communicate information. When used as a creative teaching method, it is often referred to as "multimedia," which combines audio, pictures, video and other interactive technological elements. Examples of common multimedia forms used in creative teaching include interactive computer software, videos, slide presentations and live broadcasts.

Multimedia can be used to enhance other teaching methods. For example, computerized slide presentations can be created for use in storytelling, review games, object lessons, worship and discussion. When multimedia is used effectively, it could potentially engage all four types of learners.

Drama

Drama is often used in children's ministry as a means to dramatize a Bible story for an audience of students, though you could dramatize just about anything! You might use drama to provide role-playing opportunities for students to practise concepts they have learned in a lesson, or to present scenarios to students in the form of a skit to encourage interactive discussion.

Drama can easily engage all four types of learners as well. A dramatic presentation immediately appeals to the visual learner, who requires visual stimulation in order to best comprehend a lesson. But if that same dramatic presentation takes on the form of role-playing, it will engage the tactual and kinesthetic learners since they need to be physically involved in the lesson and practise the lesson. Finally, if relevant questions are posed to the audience or a discussion is generated among the students after the dramatic presentation, then auditory learners will also become actively involved in the lesson.

Object Lessons

An object lesson is yet another effective method of creative teaching. An object lesson is taught by presenting a tangible object to a group of students and then comparing that object to a spiritual truth. For example, you could use an object such as an eraser, which is used to eliminate mistakes on students' homework, to illustrate how salvation and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ eliminate sin.

Likewise, object lessons appeal to each type of learner if used appropriately. Consider how you could engage each type of learner using this very basic example of an object lesson.

1. First, display an eraser, or a picture of an eraser, to your group of students. This immediately engages the visual learners in your group.

2. If you brought an eraser for every single student in your class, then each student could hold it, touch it, and even use it, which would appeal to both the visual and the tactual learners in your group.

3. Next, have all of the students write down the word “sin” on a piece of paper in pencil. Prepare and write down a list of sins (perhaps from the Ten Commandments) and have the students explain what each one means and why we should not do it. This step will engage the auditory learners, who learn best by interacting verbally and discussing the lesson.

4. Then explain to the students how the eraser is like Jesus: just as an eraser gets rid of the mistakes they make on their homework, so, too, does Jesus get rid of the sin in their lives.

5. Have the students pray and ask Jesus to forgive their sin.

6. Finally, scatter the papers on the floor and have each child find their paper. Encourage them to use their erasers to erase the sins they have written on their paper. By doing so, you engage the kinesthetic learner by providing them with an opportunity to put the lesson in practice.

Jesus, the Creative Teacher

Consider the ways in which Jesus taught His disciples and others who followed Him. He used simple everyday objects like birds (Matthew 6:26; Luke 12:24), flowers (Matthew 6:28–30; Luke 12:27–28), a tree and its fruit (Matthew 7:15–23; Luke 6:43–45); sheep (John 10:1–18) and children (Matthew 19:13–15; Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17) to teach complex spiritual lessons.

Likewise, consider how Jesus taught to engage every type of learner. In speaking with His disciples, who were fishermen by trade, He used the visual of a fishing net full of fish to explain how they would instead be fishers of men (Matthew 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11). Similarly, Jesus provided opportunities for people to interact verbally with Him through questions and discussions (Matthew 13:36–43; 19:16–30; Luke 8:9–15). Also note how Jesus provided His disciples with a tactual demonstration about the purpose of His death during the Last Supper using bread and wine (Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:14–20). Additionally, Jesus provided plenty of opportunities for His disciples to practise their faith by sending them out to preach (Matthew 10:1–16; Mark 6:6b–13; Luke 9:1–6), by inviting Peter to experience faith by walking on the water (Matthew 14:22–32); and by challenging them to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19–20).

Reflect

What type of learner are you? Are you a visual learner, an auditory learner, a tactual learner, a kinesthetic learner or some combination of the four? Think of specific examples of particularly effective lessons you have learned and how they were taught.

Think about the forums and contexts in which you learn. Through what types of creative teaching methods do you personally learn best?

Identify the types of learners among the group of students you usually teach and indicate which creative teaching methods best appeal to and engage each student. Create a written list of names of students and their strongest learning style. Use this list regularly to help remind you of how best to teach and reach your students.

Think about the resources available to you. Which creative teaching methods, such as media, drama and object lessons, could you utilize when you teach? How could you use these methods within each segment of your lesson to make your teaching more effective?

Respond

1. Choose either a lesson you have recently taught or an upcoming lesson. Describe in detail how you would use multimedia, drama and object lessons as creative teaching methods for each of the following lesson components:

- Lesson or Theme Introduction
- Worship & Prayer
- Scripture Verse Activities
- Bible Story or Sermon
- Game or Hands-On Activities
- Lesson Review.

2. For each of the creative teaching methods and lesson components you described above, identify the type of learner it would best engage.

Endnotes

1. Capehart, Jody, Gordon West, and Becki West. *The Discipline Guide for Children's Ministry* (Loveland: Group, 1997).

2. Ibid., 62–69.

notes

notes

Module 8

Session 4

SESSION 4

Response Times

by Pam McArthur

Have you ever found yourself in a meeting at work where you really wanted to say something but never got the chance? You desperately waited for your turn to share or propose a different point of view, but the meeting was adjourned before the words ever had a chance to come out of your mouth. You may have been consumed with doubt and frustration as the thoughts continued to churn in your head.

In our ministry to children we have a lot of meetings. We meet with kids on Sunday morning, maybe Sunday night, and possibly again throughout the week. Each time we plan to teach them something. My question to you in this module is simple. Are we giving children an opportunity to respond? Can they ask questions, suggest life application and put it into practice? Or are we sending them home with unanswered questions and feelings of doubt or frustration?



Read

Responding by Listening

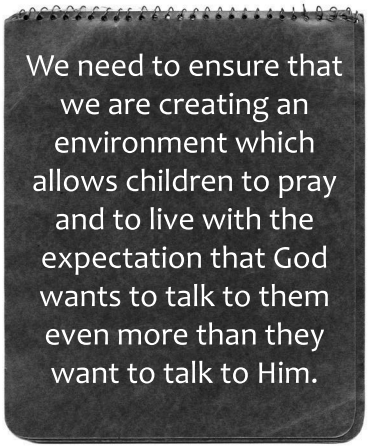
Job 37:4–6 and 1 Samuel 3:1–18

As Pentecostals, we place a high degree of emphasis on our experience with God. We pay attention to the leading of the Spirit, we consider the small things that we encounter daily in light of our relationship with God, and we stress the importance of talking and listening to God. As we raise a generation of young Pentecostals, remember that doing is a part of learning. Children need to learn to hear the voice of God! We need to teach the discipline of learning to our adult volunteers and to the children in our programs.

The faith of children is remarkably simple. We often complicate what God has made simple. Listening to the voice of God and hearing His

voice—regardless of whether it comes in a still small voice or via loud thunder—is an important skill that children need to be taught. Children must be taught early in life to rely on God for their answers and direction. They will learn to recognize God's voice if we teach them the things we know are true, and if we instruct them about what He has said to others in the Bible. As children's ministries leaders, we have responsibility in the church to provide both an opportunity and an appropriate environment so that "listening to God" can happen.

Teaching children to pray prayers beyond the Lord's Prayer and "God bless this food" is vital for effective response to His Word. We need to ensure that we are creating an environment which allows children to pray and to live with the expectation that God wants to talk to them even more than they want to talk to Him.



Teach children to be honest with God. Help them understand, through your example, that God can be trusted with the hard questions and that they can listen and expect an answer from Him. Show them where to look in the Bible for places where God has spoken to His people before. Read them the words that God spoke to those who loved Him, and listened to Him. Share personal examples of times when you yourself heard God speak. Ask them if they have anything to share.

Children need to understand from us that talking to God is more like having a conversation with someone than just leaving a message. They need to make time in all their "telling" to listen and hear what God has to say. Tell them that God cares about what they care about, that He wants them to talk about all the things that are on their minds. Encourage them to do this by saying things like "Tell God what makes you happy," or have them ask God a question and wait in silence for Him to speak to them. My favourite response from this activity was with a large group of three- to five-year-olds. During our sharing time one child said, "I told God that my favourite colour was blue and He told me, 'That's my favourite color too!' "

Responding by Doing

Mark 9:14–29

Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus teaching His students, the disciples. They listened to His teaching, they discussed hard questions, and they often asked why He did the things He did. They were able to try for themselves and continued to learn through a long series of victories and failures. It is interesting to note that more questions arose through trial and error. Through each opportunity, Jesus was there to assist and to continue training in preparation for the day when He would no longer be with the disciples physically, the day when the Holy Spirit would empower them.

In children's ministry we rely a lot on teaching through the spoken word. Although we see that Jesus often taught this way, it was certainly not His only method of teaching. There are a number of practical ways we can incorporate "doing" or "going" into our lessons.

First, teach with the expectation that children should be living out what they have just learned. How often do we shortchange children by underestimating them? Join with them in this expectation and have them expect just as much from you.

Be sure to provide children with examples. Have you ever heard an idea from someone else that sparked your imagination? Did you find ways to put the same idea into practice? This works with children too. It is important for you to find creative ways of sharing ideas that can spur on those who might not be able to initiate the "doing" for themselves. It is essential that kids put into practice what they are taught. We can help them put their faith into practice by offering concrete suggestions of things they can do. Once they've started with the action, even if it takes a little while for the message to sink in, they can learn by doing and come to their own understanding. They can carry the classroom with them in their own actions. At the end of the lesson plan, have the kids draw pictures of how they are going to put into practice that week what they have learned. Or what about recording their ideas on a tape recorder, in a personal journal or on a classroom website? What concrete actions can you think of that might help your children put into practice what they have learned?

For these suggestions to work, though, accountability is important. If children know that there will not be enough time to share their stories, or

that no one is even going to ask about their experiences with the lesson, then there is little chance they will remember what you have taught them—and even less of a chance they will respond to it. On the flip side, if "taking it home," "putting it into practice" and "celebrating" what you have learned is a key part of your children's ministry program, and children are given a chance to share their responses, then excitement will propel your children not only to listen, but to respond to what they have been taught.

Encouraging Reflection as Response

Our faith is, in many ways, very simple. But nobody said it was easy. When you teach children on a Sunday morning, you are helping them to learn patterns and actions and thoughts that many of them will hold on to for life. This doesn't mean that our adult faith should look exactly like our childhood faith—the process of developing as a Christian takes a lifetime. It is very unlikely that a child will walk away from one of your classes with a full grasp of what you've been teaching.

The greatest response you can receive from the children you teach is a long-term commitment to Christ. But, even for a child, this is not something that will come easily. A child cannot be expected to make an enduring commitment without making their faith their own.
To this point, you have been encouraged to give your children an opportunity to respond by listening to the voice of God, and by putting what they learn into action. If your children are constantly leaving your class confused, there may be a problem that you should address. However, we should expect children to reflect on what they have learned. They need to play with it in their mind, try things out, look around and process what they've been taught. One of the most difficult yet rewarding things you can do as a teacher is to encourage your children to reflect on what they have been taught. Give them opportunities to ask questions, to check their progress and to be accountable to what you have previously taught and what they have learned.

Plan your lessons in large blocks that stay consistently on the same topic for several weeks. There should be a certain amount of repetition so children do not feel that they are interrupting a lesson to share their thoughts on a given topic. Be sure to reinforce and re-illustrate your message so your children are not too distracted by constant shifts in topic. Help them to absorb your message fully. Variation is not a bad thing. You will want to make slight shifts in perspective or emphasis, but

move and shift around only within a central topic or idea. Then allow children to reflect and share their thoughts with you and the class.

As a final challenge when you discuss stories from the Bible, allow your children to process them and even offer interpretation. Story is one of the most effective teaching tools available to us. However, the way many of us were taught directs us to make moral or needlessly convoluted applications of the Bible's stories. Allow your children to explain to you and others in the class what a particular story says before offering their own interpretive meaning. Reflection allows children to process what they have been taught but also teaches them the discipline of interpretation. Make sure their thoughts are on target with what God's Word actually says or else they may not develop the foundation for a firm, lifelong faith in Jesus.

Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on and journal about the following questions.

Are you intentionally living out what you have learned from Sunday to Sunday in your own life? How has that made a difference in your life and in your relationship with God?

Are you taking quiet time to listen to the voice of God? Are you asking Him tough questions and looking and listening for His answers? What has God been talking to you about during these quiet times?

Have you been listening to what your children think about God? Do they have a voice in your classroom? How can you give them greater opportunities to listen to God?

Respond

1. In planning your next children's ministry lesson, how can you intentionally incorporate what you have learned about yourself and the children you teach? Write out specific ways that you will be purposeful this Sunday in doing the following with your children in church:
    - Training children to respond to God through "doing."
    - Training children to respond to God through "listening."

- Making your lessons consistent and encouraging times of reflection within each teaching opportunity.

2. Write out five specific ways you plan on using this module in your own life (through your time of daily devotion or attending the adult Sunday service). How are you going to begin learning by doing, by listening, by letting the message capture not only your head, but your heart?

3. Take time daily this week to sit quietly, starting for even for 10 minutes. Pray that God would reveal Himself to you. Read your Bible. Look specifically for stories of people in the Bible who had similar questions or struggles. Be assured that God does want to speak to you. Journal about your experiences.

notes

Module 9

Tips From the Classroom



Module 9
Session 1

SESSION 1

Captivating Kids in Large Group Settings

by Annie Riendeau

"Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them ..." Matthew 5:1, 2.

When Jesus spoke to crowds, people had a tendency to hang around. They hung on His every word and sometimes they even forgot to eat. Jesus captivated crowds because His message was totally revolutionary. He taught with authority and challenged the way things were being done. He went as far as to say things like "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago ... but I tell you ..." He captivated the people with the content of His message.

Today, there are specialists who are hired by large companies to study what captivates kids. They want to know what is getting kids' attention on the web, on television, in clothing, in food, in their hobbies, and in their reading. They understand what is attractive to kids and use that information on behalf of restaurants, snack companies, toy companies, and a host of other commercial interests.

As a children's minister, you will need to know a little bit of what these people know, but not so much that you turn the gospel into something to be sold. The way you communicate is sometimes as important as what you are communicating. You need to walk a careful balance between being persuasive and conforming the Christian message to a commercial medium. The Christian message is our content, but the way we communicate Jesus' message is also informative.

You have the privilege of knowing the content of your message—Jesus. If you are captivated by Jesus, you need to be able to communicate that message attractively and in a godly way. The trick is knowing how to do

that for a large group of kids!

Like everything else in life, it takes time and preparation to achieve a goal. For this session, your goal is to attract and hold the attention of a large group of kids so you can teach them about Jesus.



Read

Preparation

When you are involved in children's ministry, you are always on duty. When you go shopping, keep in mind that the gadget you see at the dollar store may serve as a fun game or an illustration. When you hear or read something memorable, make a note of it for future reference. When you read, see, touch, smell or taste something special, make note of these discoveries in a safe place just in case. Keep a journal for your ministry that records all of your ideas. No matter how good you think they are, the ideas may need adjustment later. Always make sure to note where you see things so that, if your notes pay off, you will know exactly where to look for what you need.

This is the way Dwight L. Moody, the famous preacher, did things. When he was preparing for sermons, he would write a Bible verse on an envelope and put anything that he thought might be helpful as an illustration into that envelope. When it was time to write his message, he would simply go to his envelope, sort through what he had, and use his gathered notes to finish his sermon.

Plunge into kids' world

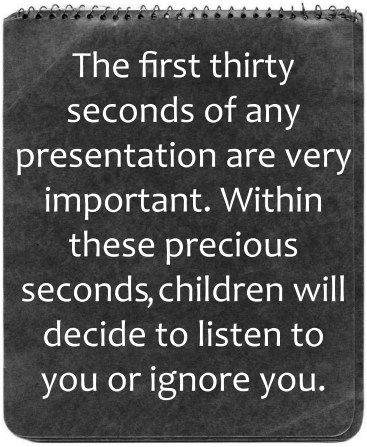
It is important for you, as someone who is about the business of teaching kids, to understand their world and what they like. Have you seen the latest movies and online videos? Do you know what kids watch on television? Do you know what kinds of food they like? Do you use social media or other Internet programs or games that would be popular with kids? Do you know what music they listen to?

If you have the means, consider subscribing to a kids' magazine. Have you read the novel or series that every kid is reading? It is great to be able to engage kids in things that already interest them. Showcase things they already know to teach them the truths of the Bible. Use illustrations from their world if you can—but make sure they are current. You never

know when you might see a relevant story in a movie, TV show or book that you can use as a parable. You need to be immersed in kids' culture if you want to connect with them.

A lot of ideas

Constantly be on the lookout for new ways to present your lessons to the kids. Show them a video. Video yourself from a "remote location." Use characters. Use puppets. Incorporate music into the teaching rather than just using it during worship. Play a game. Put on a talk show. Interview people during your lesson. Invite guest speakers. Whatever you can think of to keep things fresh, new and fast-paced will go a long way towards keeping the kids involved. In a large group of kids, you have to be even more diligent about keeping things fresh. Even in a small group setting, you will be hard pressed to find one or two things that are appreciated by the whole group. Find exciting and innovative ways to teach kids about Jesus. You may need to compensate for the constant variety by staying on individual topics for a longer period of time, and also by introducing unique elements into your service that are well received. Stay consistent from week to week.



Pray

Prepare yourself in prayer. Pray that God would reveal Himself to you and help you understand the secrets, desires and needs in the kids' hearts. He knows every child whom He will bring to you. God will inspire you with the words, the stories and the illustrations that will impact the lives of children—even if you cannot speak personally with each child in the context of a large group.

The Introduction—Get Your Kids' Attention

In a large group, you need an amazingly creative, articulate and gifted presenter who knows exactly how to turn a phrase. You can do almost anything with children as long as it is presented in a creative way.

When you are presenting to a large group of kids, they should be happy to be there from before the beginning! The first thirty seconds

of any presentation to kids are very important. Within these precious seconds, children will decide to listen to you or ignore you. Before you do any work to *keep* your kids' attention, you have to *get* it. To do this, you have to think big. Use big emotions, big visual effects, big setup and big visuals. You have to think BIG because every child needs to be able to see everything that is going on to hear the message. Every child needs to be able to see the person who is talking. When children can't see what is going on, they will stop listening and will very quickly begin to disturb others around them. Make sure things are happening a little above floor level—a stage is ideal. Other presentation options should also be available: a projector, a big screen, a good sound system and exaggerated objects.

Holding Hard-Won Attention

If you've done your job in the first thirty seconds, you should have your students' attention. Now it's time to hold their attention. The attention of the group gives you the chance to proceed faster and get the action going! If you feel that you are losing attention, use humour or fun signals, but never react angrily. If your group is very big, you will have to speak slowly.

If certain kids disconnect during your presentation, be sure you regain their attention before continuing. Establish a "silence code." For example, you shout "Chips and chocolate!" and have the kids answer "Peanuts!" before going quiet. For even better results, adapt your silence code to fit your seasonal theme.

You need to be able to tell stories. A good story, told dramatically, can have kids sitting on the edge of their seats. Use images and create pictures in your kids' minds with exaggerated gestures. Make sure your facial expressions and gestures are visible as you tell stories. They will help you communicate the message clearly and hold your kids' attention.

You need to be in touch with the world kids live in and put the message into terms they can understand and hold on to. Even in a large group, children can feel as though they are being spoken to directly. Let your eyes wander around the audience. Address one child at a time, but for no longer than five seconds. You need to keep your eyes open and look over the whole crowd so each child feels that you have spoken to them at least once. Share your testimony. Use stories from your life as examples. Let the kids see that you aren't perfect. Even as you are

telling stories, make sure you involve the audience in some way. Ask listeners to sing, clap or repeat phrases. They should feel as though they are involved in everything you are doing.

Reflect

How well do you know kids' culture? Are you interested in their world?

If you are getting kids' attention, how does the content of your services compare with its presentation?

How much time do you spend preparing to teach in a large group? What kind of preparation are you doing?

What are the things that prevent you from doing great ministry in a large group?

Respond

Make a list of all the advantages of teaching in a large group.
Make another list of the things that the children in your large group are into. Take some time this week to read a popular book or take in a movie that your students would also be watching. Evaluate what your students are doing, watching and reading on the Internet and in social media.

Design a children's service for a large group. Plan for an hour and a half. This plan must be ready for use by you and your team. Include scripts, games, stories, music, lists of materials, stage plans, and any other details that are necessary for a successful and spiritually effective teaching time.

Module 9

Session 2

SESSION 2

Captivating Kids in Small Group Settings

by Philippe Chassé

While Jesus was addressing His disciples, He brought a child among them and told them they must be just like that little child to enter the kingdom of God (Mark 10:15). He wanted to connect with them by using the child as an illustration of something that was both familiar and on hand. He used what He had around Him to His advantage. He captivated them with something everybody could identify with: a child. Jesus wanted to make a point that He knew His disciples would understand.

Captivating kids in a small group takes things to a more personal level. The children see your face, hear your voice, and evaluate your movements. Likewise, you can see their faces, hear their voices, and measure their level of engagement. You may find that your resources are limited, so you will need to find a way to engage kids and keep them interested with what you have on hand. Look around you. There is always something you can use. Make sure your illustrations are seasonal and timely. When it's time for the children to go back to school, use familiar items like erasers, pencils and rulers to remind them that the blood of Jesus takes away their sins, that God writes their name in the book of life, and that the love of God has no measurable limits.



Read

Every day you are bombarded with the same images as your kids. You need to pay careful attention to them. Take note of them. Familiarize yourself with the ideas and stories that kids are familiar with. Make reference to them in your lessons and use object lessons and illustrations they can relate to. Make sure that your kids know you are paying attention to what they care about. The Apostle Paul did basically this same thing.

> *Paul stood up in the middle of the council on Mars Hill and said, "People of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. As I was walking through town and carefully observing your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'To an unknown God.' What you worship as unknown, I now proclaim to you* (Acts 17:22–23, CEB).

Paul saw an altar with an inscription, one that the people on Mars Hill would likely have passed every day. It was a part of their culture. But Paul used it to teach them something. He used what was familiar to them to teach them something about Jesus.

Jesus did the same thing. He used what was around Him and taught the truth. He captivated the people with things they could relate to. You need to take a closer look at what is around you and use it. For example, if you are talking about the size of the ark, describe it in terms of football fields or school buses so your students have a frame of reference they can understand.

Take a moment to read Luke 9:44–48 (CEB).

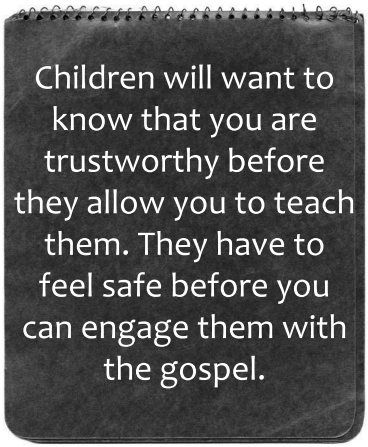
> *"Take these words to heart: the Human One is about to be delivered into human hands." They didn't understand this statement. Its meaning was hidden from them so they couldn't grasp it. And they were afraid to ask him about it. An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. Aware of their deepest thoughts, Jesus took a little child and had the child stand beside him. Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever is least among you all is the greatest*.

Take a closer look at the text above. Jesus was teaching His disciples something that needed to be illustrated. He adjusted His message to His context. Jesus was sensitive to His audience. They were afraid to ask Him what He meant so they argued among themselves, but they missed the mark. Their ambition was as foreign to God as the altars on Mars Hill. So Jesus used an illustration they could understand—a child. A child's simplicity and dependence on others are the complete opposite of the dominance they were planning. When Jesus taught on their level, He gave them the truth in a way they could all understand.
When you are teaching kids in a small group, keep this in mind. Frame

your illustrations to suit the needs and situations of the children. Be aware of the direction that their culture is leading them in. Keep firmly in mind the direction that God wants them to go. Use what you know about kids and their world as examples and illustrations. Hold their attention by focusing on where they are in life and teaching in a way that matches their life situations and generational culture. Overall, do not lose sight of your main goal—to make disciples and teach kids about Jesus and His message.

Take a moment to read Matthew 28:18–20 (CEB).

> *Jesus came near and spoke to them, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. 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, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."*



This Great Commission is your goal. As a children's pastor or leader, you have a very specific part to play in teaching "all nations." You may wish to read some suggestions Lorna Jenkins has made in her book *Shouting in the Temple*.[1]

In order to "make disciples" of children in a small group, you will need to treat them with respect. Children will want to know that you are trustworthy before they allow you to teach them. They have to feel safe before you can engage them with the gospel. The first impression you make is very important. Be sure to acknowledge children as often as possible, and in terms that they understand. Make sure you approach children on their terms. You can compliment them on something they are wearing or something they have brought with them. Listen earnestly when you talk with them and let them know that you understand them. If a child makes reference to something you don't know about, look it up. Ask the parents of your students about things that may be insightful concerning their children; the next time you see the kids, talk about what you found out.

You do not, however, have to be just like your children. Share your

own life experiences and stories. Make sure they know you are truly understanding their needs by involving yourself in their world, and also by bringing your grown-up experience to bear on their world. Ask children about what they want to do later in life; help them realize that with God everything is possible. Pray with them and see what God will do.

Be sure to make eye contact with each of your children so they know you are aware of them. Everyone wants to be noticed, either by a kind word or just a smile. Gestures like this will help them to be comfortable and feel that they are important.

Speak to them on their level. You may even want to crouch down. This will show that you are interested in hearing what they have to say, and that you are listening to them. It shows them that you care and that you want to be eye to eye with them. Epictetus, a Greek philosopher, once said, "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." Always use positive and encouraging words to build up your students. Your ministry should never tear children down.

Here are some other tips from the book *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*[2] by John Maxwell:

- Discover and identify the strength of each child.
- Acknowledge the value of each person's strength and potential contribution.
- Build on what they already understand so they can develop to a higher level.
- You have to make your ideas work for more than one child, so simplify them.
- Ask for feedback.
- Ask children in the group to share what they have learned.
- The experience that children usually enjoy most in a group setting is teamwork.

Finally, you will need to repeat yourself often. The Apostle Paul was always doing this, especially in Philippians. He wrote in Philippians 3:1 (CEB), "*So then, my brothers and sisters, be glad in the Lord. It's no trouble for me to repeat the same things to you because they will help keep you on track."* In Philippians 4:4 (CEB), Paul repeated himself just to ensure that his point was made: *"Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad!"* Paul repeated things so that people would hear, remember and understand. You will need to repeat things for your children so that they will understand just like adults.

Reflect

It is important to take the time and just observe where your group has been, where you are with your group now, and where you want to take them. If your group is composed mainly of new kids who do not know a lot about the Bible, you need to start with the basics. If your group has been taught the basics, you need to go into details. Kids love to learn new things, combine both—a good foundation and a new revelation.

Take a moment to reflect on and journal on the following questions.

- Who is in my group? Where have they been, and where do I want to take them?
- What do I have around me? What could I use in my environment to teach my kids?
- Where can I go to get ideas? What do my kids love to do?
- How do I adjust to my group?
- Why do I need to adjust to my group?
- Do they trust me enough to follow me?

Respond

Write the names of the children in your group. Record where they live, who their parents are, whether they have brothers or sisters, and five things you think each one likes most. Also write down five Bible stories they like most.

Pray and find five ways that you can tell these five Bible stories with a prop, music or skit using things that are around you. Which aspect of each story is the “must teach” lesson that your students need to know or have reinforced? Rewrite each as if they were being told by a storyteller in this day and culture.

Read the following parables from the New Testament:

- Luke 15:3–7 (The Lost Sheep)
- Luke 15:8–10 (The Lost Coin)
- Luke 15:11–32 (The Lost Son).

Endnotes

1. Jenkins, Lorna. *Shouting in the Temple: A Radical Look at Children's Ministry* (TOUCH Ministries, 1999).
2. Maxwell, John C. *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect: What the Most Effective People Do Differently* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).

notes

notes

Module 9

Session 3

SESSION 3

Discipline

by Annie Riendeau

The way that each of us approaches discipline says a lot about our character. Some are paralyzed just thinking about it. Others run as fast as their legs can carry them just to avoid facing it. Some embrace it warmly like an old friend. Others have never tried it and do not know what to expect. What comes to mind when you think about discipline in a group of children?

Discipline is one of the greatest challenges you will face in children's ministry. Discipline is related to discipleship. But where discipleship focuses on training and instructing, discipline focuses on correcting and changing. We tend to correct "bad behaviour." We want to change children into what we want them to be. In the process we often neglect to truly train and instruct them in the way they should go.

Jesus said: " ... go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Your call is to make disciples. Discipline is an act of love—an investment in the lives of kids who are in your ministry, just as Jesus did with His disciples.

Why do kids do silly things? Why do they go to forbidden places or touch forbidden objects? Why do they consistently do things they are not supposed to do? Why do they fight, disobey, argue, provoke and annoy others? Do you sometimes get the impression that kids like trouble? Children do wrong things because they have unmet needs. They need to be seen and noticed.



Read

It's better to be disciplined than to be ignored!

A few years ago, psychologists designed a series of experiments to be

done on animals which would explain their instinctive need for activity and stimulus. Their experiments took place in four stages and in three separate environments.

At first, they placed their subjects in isolated environments with food, water and a button. The subjects ate, drank and roamed around as they pleased. Soon, though, they discovered the button. When the button was pressed, a short video clip was played. When the button was released, the video stopped. Soon the subjects were pressing the button frequently so that the video was playing almost continually.

In the second stage of the experiment, the same subjects were placed in a second environment with only food and water. They seemed to be satisfied for a short period of time without the video stimulus but soon began to demonstrate erratic behaviour. Before long, they began to destroy their environment. They fought with each other and even began to harm themselves.

For the third stage, the subjects were introduced to another environment. They were provided with food and water but were periodically subjected to weak electric shocks at various locations within the environment.

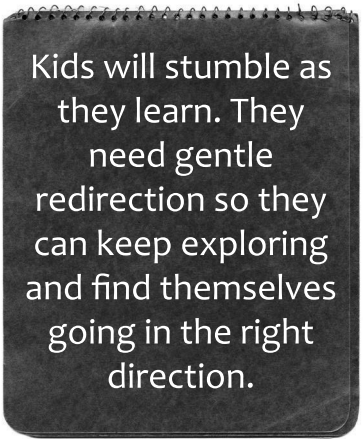
During the last stage, the subjects were removed from the third environment and given a series of choices. No one was surprised when they chose the environment with food, water and video stimulus. However, when that option was removed, the subjects chose the environment with the weak electric shocks over the isolation of the environment with only food and water.

The results of this experiment are astounding. I can tell you that children were not the subjects of the experiment. The use of animals means that this experiment was designed to test some of the most basic instinctive reactions and driving needs. It is significant for our study because it demonstrates that the need for activity or stimulus is deeply engrained in the instinct. In short, even irritation is better than boredom.

Psychologists would argue that we have the same basic instincts buried inside of us. We need to be engaged and stimulated. Boredom has terrible consequences. We like to have something to do. We will do just about anything (right, wrong or even harmful) to avoid being bored. We will even choose hardship and irritation over boredom.

Considering this basic need, we must remember that kids want to be engaged, even on Sundays when they come to church. They want to be involved, they want to be challenged, and they want to be noticed! “If you don’t have a plan for the kids, they will have a plan for you!”

With this in mind, we can say that most misbehaviour is a result of the learning process. Children are learning and exploring. They are experimenting and figuring out what it means to live and to interact with one another and their world. In the process, they will make plenty of wrong turns and mistakes. Kids will stumble as they learn. They need gentle redirection so they can keep exploring and find themselves going in the right direction. Redirection and discipline are a whole lot easier when you have a good relationship with your children. Does this mean we should not set any rules? Certainly not!



Begin by establishing positive rules. Tell the children what you want them to do—not what they should not be doing. Otherwise, you reinforce the negative. Consider setting three or four “class rules.” Alternately, you could have them follow one very broad rule like “respect,” with three or four interpretations; “Respect your teacher”; “Respect your peers”; “Respect the things around you”; and “Respect the rule!”

If you are leading preschool age children, their attention span will not be the same as junior highs. Be reasonable in your expectations. Keep your children’s age and developmental progress in mind. Preschoolers will find it very difficult to be quiet or to remember to raise their hands before speaking during a lesson. Make sure that the consequences you set reflect developmental stages and are proportionate to the misbehaviour and the child’s age. It never hurts to ask for a simple apology. This may be harder for children than it seems. No one likes to admit openly that they are wrong. Consider giving time-outs of a minute for younger children or five minutes for older kids. Be very careful of discipline that is too harsh or inappropriate for children. For example, if your service is an hour long, it would be unreasonable to have a student sit or be sequestered for the whole lesson.

If you have to apply discipline, be sure to follow these few guidelines:

- Discipline immediately. Do not wait until the end of a class when a child may not remember what he/she did.
- Be sure that the child understands exactly why they are being disciplined, that you are disciplining misbehaviour, and that you are not punishing them because you dislike them personally. Be sure that you do not discipline children out of dislike or favouritism.
- Forget past behaviour. Avoid phrases like “You always …”
- Show that you care about the children outside of class.
- Build a relationship worthy of mutual respect.

Your Style and Your Personal Limits

The size of your group should affect your discipline. In a small group, every child has more of your attention and greater opportunity to speak and be noticed than in a large group. Sometimes teachers have trouble with discipline because they try to manage more than they are able. You have your limits and a right to ask for help.

When you think about discipline, you are also influenced by your personal style in managing discipline. Consider the following styles of discipline and see if you can identify yourself.

The Drill Sergeant

You are afraid to lose control, so you control everything. Kids don’t have room to decide because you decide everything and each moment is planned. You are in charge of everything. Children have to do things your way. They are afraid of your reactions. Sometimes inexperienced teachers are control freaks because they are afraid and don’t know how to discipline. If you have this tendency, remember that children’s ministry should be fun, and that a certain amount of disorder is to be expected.

The Free Spirit

You don’t know what discipline is and you don’t think it is important in a group. You think that kids are able to manage themselves and make appropriate decisions. You have a tendency to say yes to every request. You don’t like confrontation. If you are this easygoing teacher, you might want to look for a mentor to help you learn balanced discipline. Think about rules that you can put in place, and consider using the one-rule model.

The Democrat

You know you must implement rules, but you like to involve kids in this process. Kids develop self-discipline because you encourage them and work at building their self-esteem. Kids know they are safe—they know they can be kids and make mistakes without being reprimanded.

Good disciplinarians are aware of what is going on in class. They maintain the rhythm of the lesson, they overlap activities, they intervene discreetly, they intentionally ignore some bad behaviour, they use humour, and they show respect for all of their students.

Reflect

Does the discipline you use in your ministry focus more on instructing and training, or on correcting and changing behaviour? Why?

Do you think children know what they have done wrong when you discipline them? “Because **I** said so” is not enough!

Do you agree or disagree with the sentence, “Disciplinary problems are adult problems, not child problems”?

What is your natural tendency for managing discipline? What do you need to change or improve upon?

Think about a time in your life when you needed discipline. What was it like? How did you feel? How would the disciplinarian have felt? Was their discipline successful? Why?

Respond

Write 20 ways (in sentence form) to BUILD UP a child.

Describe your worst struggles with discipline. List the strategies you have tried. Write down some strategies you could try for greater success.

Write your own definition of *discipline*. Record the values that you want to communicate to your team, the parents, and the children in your ministry.

Module 9

Session 4

SESSION 4

Ministering to Kids With Special Needs

by Annette Minor

As children's ministry leaders, it is our job to provide for and meet the needs of all the children within our programs. Each child who comes through our doors is dearly loved and accepted by God. We all know this is true, yet sometimes it is very hard to maintain focus when a child's behaviour is challenging! These behaviours can range from a child's being intensely withdrawn to severely acting out. You may be thinking, *What does behaviour have to do with this lesson? I thought this lesson was about ministering to children with special needs!* In this module, we will look at behaviour as a form of communication. A child's behaviour tells us whether that child has unmet needs and/or unmet expectations.

For the most part, children with special needs who act out are not purposefully trying to be difficult. They are trying to tell us something. Even the child who is not engaged is telling us that his/her needs are not being met. An ability to understand how children see their world and their needs should change the way we design our programs so that every child is engaged. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd was not content with the safety of ninety-nine of his one hundred sheep. He searched to find the one that had wandered off. Children with special needs are often like that lost little sheep. Due to their unique needs and characteristics, we often forget that they are children; we focus instead on their label or diagnosis. Just as the shepherd in Jesus' story sought after the one sheep, teachers and ministers should always keep this in mind. We should not focus on completing a program; rather, the focus should be our children—ALL of our children. Our question is: How do we modify our environment and implement proper strategies and techniques to ensure that all children, including those with special needs, feel they belong and are very much a part of our ministry?

Read

Defining "Disability"

Learning disorders and disabilities are a reality with which every teacher must become comfortable. Children who have been diagnosed with one disability are often diagnosed with a number of conditions or disorders within that disability. For example, 60 per cent of children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have also been diagnosed with a least one other disorder, though it is not uncommon for a diagnosis to include several other conditions. Some examples of other disorders associated with children include, but are not limited to: depression, anxiety disorders (generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, phobias, etc.), Tourette's syndrome, autism and other pervasive developmental disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome, eating disorders and learning disabilities.

Although this list is incomplete, it shows that not all children who present issues have ADHD, as many believe. Each disorder has its own distinct characteristics. Keep in mind that often the characteristics of one disorder may look very much like the distinguishing features of another to the untrained eye—it is not your task to diagnose. As leaders, we must shift from focusing on disciplining behaviours to meeting the needs caused by a disorder or disability. It is only when a child's needs are met that they will feel safe within their environment. We cannot effectively engage a child who does not feel safe. In this lesson we will look at four of the most common disorders or disabilities that are present today and discover how we can best minister to affected children.

Children with ADD and ADHD

ADHD is a neurological disorder that presents itself in a child before the age of seven. It affects three to five per cent of the population. The three characteristics of ADHD are:

1. *Inattention* (attention deficit). Children with ADD/HD often appear not to listen when spoken to, fail to follow instructions/ directions or finish tasks, have difficulty focusing, concentrating, sustaining attention and working independently, and avoid tasks requiring a high amount of mental energy. Many frequently lose things or forget where they have placed them.
2. *Hyperactivity.* Children with ADD/HD are often fidgety, squirmy

and restless. They wander and have difficulty with quiet play.

3. *Impulsiveness*. Children with ADD/HD can be aggressive, interrupt others frequently, rush through work, act before thinking, and have trouble staying quiet. They can also be impatient and require almost constant stimulation.

Children With Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities result from the impairment of one or more processes related to perception, thinking, memory or learning. They range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following: speaking, reading, writing or mathematics. Children with learning disabilities may also have difficulties with their organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective. Depending on other precipitating factors, some characteristics may include: impulsiveness, frustration and poor sportsmanship. Frequently, they have difficulty creating friendships, accepting changes in routine, and working with others. Often they will miss subtle or nonverbal cues. They will also regularly exhibit emotional distress, depression, anxiety or aggression.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of five “pervasive developmental disorders” initially identified by the American Psychiatric Association. There are four fundamental characteristics of the disorder.

First, in children with ASD, sensory perceptions are distorted. Resistant behaviours are the result of sensory discomfort. The child often feels that his/her environment is hostile. You may notice that ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches can be painful for the child. This will cause them to react to specific sensory stimuli in a way that may seem disproportionate. In actual fact, these responses are not disproportionate or exaggerated; they reflect the distortion and amplification of the child’s sense perception—they are in real distress.

Second, there are speech and language challenges. Children with ASD process things concretely. That is, they interpret social and language interactions literally. They think in pictures—not words. They do not categorize. They do not understand idioms, puns, nuances, metaphors, allusions, sarcasm or other inferential modes of communication. They usually have a limited vocabulary and experience difficulty in expressing their feelings. They may also have an extensive vocabulary as a result of echolalia—they will memorize and repeat words or phrases they have

been exposed to, though they may not understand them.

Third, children with ASD often avoid social interaction. They do not know how to start conversations or enter into play. They do not read facial expressions, body language or other emotive signals. Finally, children with ASD often suffer from whole child/self-esteem issues. A child with ASD has hopes and dreams, wants and fears. Autism is not who he or she is.

Children with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Children develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after they have experienced a traumatic event they were not able to resolve. PTSD interferes with normal life functions by setting up certain triggers that must be avoided. Sufferers are often ruled by these triggers and fears. Children with PTSD manifest characteristics/behaviours that appear similar to ADHD or a learning disability. In fact, PTSD is often misdiagnosed as one of these two. When triggered, children with PTSD live in a state of terror.

Identified struggles for children with special needs

- Feeling emotionally unsafe
- Anxiety issues
- Inability to stay focused
- Inability to sit for long periods of time
- Inability to understand complex language
- Sensory overstimulation
- Inability to comprehend and retain complex instructions
- Inability to read as other children do
- Forgetfulness
- Sidetracked easily
- Low interest level
- Makes poor judgments
- Works too fast/slow
- Poor social skills
- Limited vocabulary
- Do not transition well
- Sensitive to criticism
- Regressive behaviour.

Designing Accessible Programs

With all of this information, you are now able to design your program to be sensitive to the special needs of your students. I have included some

strategies and suggestions below that you may find helpful.

First, establish classroom agreements and consequences. Formulate behavioural agreements and post them somewhere visible. Reiterate them frequently. Focus on the “do’s” and appropriate classroom behaviour rather than spotlighting undesirable behaviour. Develop a classroom schedule and routine. Post a schedule board and cross off activities as completed. Provide structure, consistent limits and routine. Establish a time and a place for everything in the classroom.

Second, modify the physical classroom to eliminate distractions. Adapt your environment and lesson plan to meet all of your identified needs. Remember that some of your students will be sensitive to hard/scratchy surfaces, noises, smells (even pleasant ones!), fluorescent lights or excessive movement around them.

Keep unused materials out of sight. Be mindful of paper clutter and other *stuff* sitting around. For some students, you may want to minimize the amount of colourful bulletin boards or decorations. Avoid dangling models and especially avoid “cool white” fluorescent lights. Ensure that children are seated away from open doors, windows, and frequent traffic routes. It may be best for some students to be seated close to the leader or teacher, or among a calm group of students.

It is sometimes helpful to create white noise. Examples include calming music, an aquarium with a water filter, or an air circulator/purifier or air conditioner. This may not be advisable, however, if you teach a child with ASD or someone who is hearing hypersensitive. For these students, provide quiet semi-isolated working areas where children can self-regulate.

Be Proactive

The best way to deal with behaviour issues is to be proactive rather than responding with discipline. Some examples of proactive practices are given below:

Provide opportunities for movement for children who cannot sit still or stay in their seat. Make sure you have lots of standing times, breaks and activities.

Children who are easily distracted by auditory or visual stimuli should sit close to where you usually stand. You should involve students in the

presentation of your lesson plan, space seating, and pair oral directions with written instructions. If you need to correct behaviour, consider using generalized verbal cues directed at the whole class so that no particular child feels singled out or put on display. You can also use a private signal or cue with children who need to be redirected. It is best, when teaching children with disabilities, to use their name often. However, to avoid singling out any one child, make it your policy to use the names of all your children regularly.

When redirecting children who are easily sidetracked, be precise. Tell them exactly what activity they should be doing and set limits if necessary.

For students who do not stay on task for appropriate periods of time, be sure to present only portions of larger projects. Instruct these students in self-monitoring and seat them among calm students. Help them set short-term goals and give only one instruction or task at a time.

For students who verbally or physically interrupt conversations or activities, be sure to reinforce positive behaviour. Do not reinforce negative behaviour with reaction responses. Prompt appropriate behaviour with a private cue and set up a behaviour contract with the student, allowing the child to have input in the process.

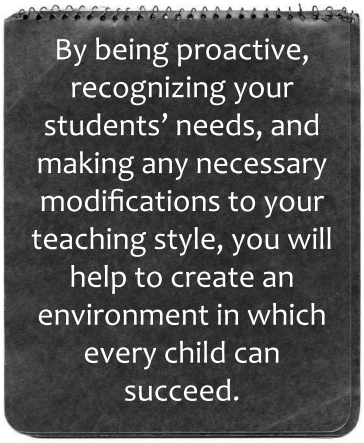
For children who do not transition well between activities, provide and post the routine for the day at the beginning of class. This makes children feel safe and secure and eliminates surprises. Provide a number of transition warnings near the end of a particular activity or stage.

While teaching, make eye contact with students who struggle with attentiveness. Keep inattentive students in close proximity. If you instruct a class verbally, make sure you write down your instructions as well. Give clear and simple directions, make use of lists, and use pictures for non-readers. For students who struggle with impulsiveness, offer choices, but limit the number of options per choice to about two (this eliminates power struggles). Be specific about requests and be consistent. Teach children to routinely stop and think about actions and reactions. Help your children develop organizational skills by using colour codes, lists, charts and schedules.

Give clear, simple, step-by-step instructions to students who are forgetful, who cannot read, or have trouble processing information. Make your instructions logical and sequential, and repeat them often.

Never say to a child with processing difficulties, “If you would pay closer attention, you would know what I said!” If you are not making yourself understood, explain yourself again in a different way or from a different perspective. If you have children with dyslexia, limit the amount of reading and writing that is required for them to learn. Be creative!

Show an interest in your students’ work. Use “I wonder” statements to renew involvement in the task. During your class time, watch for signs of frustration and intervene early. Come alongside and encourage your students. Lend a helping hand if necessary. When children become overwhelmed to the point of frustration with a particular task, allow them to be finished and redirect them away from that activity. This will avoid an escalation of their crisis.



Encourage your students’ questions—never laugh at a question. If your student cannot come up with a solution to a problem, step in. Present a limited number of problem solving options to prevent further confusion and anxiety.

If you feel that a student is moving too quickly or too slowly, try to accept the child’s pace. Intervene only if there is a dramatic shift from the child’s normal pace. Avoid giving the message, “*You are unacceptable to me*.” Even in a case where an activity is completed incorrectly, make sure to praise for partial success and for each step along the way. Walk through processes with your students, encouraging them to stop at each step along the way and plan for the next step.

By being proactive, recognizing your students’ needs, and making any necessary modifications to your teaching style and curriculum, you will help to create an environment in which every child can succeed.

Reflect

Is your ministry to children program driven or is it, first and foremost, about meeting the physical and spiritual needs of children?

Are your church and its leadership open to outreach events in your community for children and adults with special needs? Have you organized any outreach of this nature in the past? What could you do in the future?

Do you focus on disciplining undesirable behaviour or do you recognize that the behaviour of your children with special needs may require modifications to the environment and how you work with those children during your programs?

Respond

Make a list of all the children to whom you minister. Beside their names, write down everything you know about the educational needs of each individual child. Consider any learning disability or other special need about which you have informed by the child's parents, along with the individual needs that each child might have. Do not to speculate and keep all information private.

Go over the list of modifications that are mentioned in this lesson. Make a list of all of the changes you can make to your environment and/or to your method of working with specific behavioural characteristics.

Go over your list again and make a mental note of any children with visual impairments, hearing loss or other conditions. List adjustments that could be made to best meet their needs.

Plan the necessary modifications to meet the needs you have identified in this exercise.

As you reflect on possible outreach opportunities to special needs children in your community, set out a plan for what you could do to reach this group that is too often overlooked in our churches. Consider whom you would contact, what it could look like, possible volunteer leaders, necessary supplies, or changes to your facility that might be required. As you set out a realistic plan, commit it to God. Ask Him for His favour and direction to make this plan a reality. It is important that we reach every child with the love of Jesus and give them the opportunity to know and serve Him.

Module 10

Reaching Out



Module 10
Session 1

SESSION 1

Raising Kids Who Care About Others

by Hailey Armoogan

Children have incredible faith in people and the world around them. They have few doubts and are often easily convinced. Children have a remarkable capacity for feeling, understanding and giving. Life patterns, belief systems and habits are all formed in childhood—the good ones and the bad ones. Habits that form character are those which are repeated, internalized and owned.

We can explain to a child over and over again how to tie their shoelaces, but until we actually show them repeatedly, do it with them, then watch them do it on their own—they cannot successfully tie their shoelaces.

We can tell a child repeatedly to "be like Jesus" and share stories of how Jesus cares for people, but we also need to show them how to express care and compassion. Children are natural mimickers, copying what they see people around them doing and then creating their own patterns. Many a parent has been chagrined to discover their child exhibiting behaviour that displeases them, only to realize that the child is copying the parent. Children are constant learners. They are eager to try new things and make them their own. Who better for them to copy than Jesus?

Childhood is a strategic time for developing a heart of compassion and servanthood in a child that will mature as they grow. Children who are taught to think of the needs of others, and not just their own, tend to find life more fulfilling and are not as easily consumed with the need to have everything. Raising children who care about others is not simply the work of parents, but must also be taught and modelled by the community of faith. As humans, born with a sinful nature, our tendency leans towards selfishness. But as children's ministry leaders, we can come alongside parents in developing Christlike character within the children to whom we minister. Care and compassion in children can be developed by showing them, doing with them, and letting them do.

Read

One Sunday I was teaching our combined nursery/toddler class in a less than humble rented room in equally humble rental facilities that our congregation set up and tore down weekly. It was hot, and barely any air was filtering through the barred windows. A good number of the kids didn't speak English, and those who apparently did were hard to understand. Suffering from the same affliction that all church nurseries seem to have, there was no one to serve that week; so, as the children's pastor, I filled in.

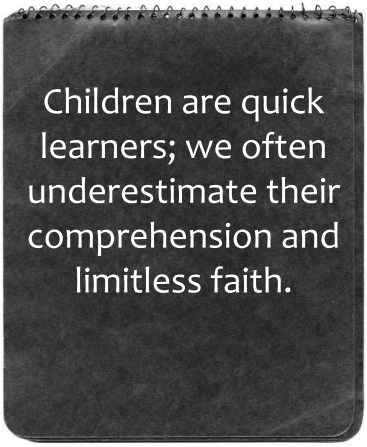
Our Bible story was the well known account of Jesus healing the crippled man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–15). I was creative, making use of teaching techniques that met the various learning styles, sang some great action songs, and even led them in making a craft to take home so they could retell the story to their family. As the class was drawing to a close, I suggested that we pray and thank Jesus for our wonderful time together. In keeping with the routine I was seeking to develop within the children's ministry, we started our prayer with "Thank You, Jesus." There were quite a few responses from our nursery and toddlers—some which I even understood! Rolling right along, we moved on to our "Help Me, Jesus …" prayer requests. Expecting the typical preschool list of requests for help in being good, being obedient, and for "owies" to get better, etc., I patiently waited for conviction to settle into their little hearts and for real transformation to start taking place.

With a fair amount of confidence one of the three-year-olds stood beside a classmate and said, "Let's pray for her!" I followed the pointing of his little grubby finger: it lead straight to the little girl sitting in a wheelchair. An assortment of bandages covered her body, yet any visible skin was severely burned. Two narrow tubes extended from her nostrils; where they ended I had no idea. I did not know her or her family very well, but what little I did know was gut-wrenching. The five-year-old girl had survived some sort of horrible scorching that had left her in a wheelchair. She had limited ability to speak, seemingly only able to take shallow, shuddering breaths. Yet her intelligent eyes followed everything, and now they were avidly looking back at me.

As I swallowed the "Huh?" that threatened to spill out, the little boy no doubt noticed my confusion. "Let's pray for her!" he said. "Like the man

by the pool!" My sluggish mind tried to decipher what the preschooler was trying to say. "You mean, you want to pray that Jesus will heal her?" By now he had groupies—the rest of the class had joined him in standing around their disabled classmate like a little prayer posse. In a flash of certainty, I knew this was a pivotal moment. It was as if time stood still. I heard myself saying, "Yes, let's lay hands on her and pray that Jesus will heal her—just as He healed the man sitting by the Pool of Bethesda. Can Jesus heal?" A rousing "yes" resounded and we prayed with childlike faith and expectation.

About 20 minutes later, the wheelchair bearing the little girl, whose eyes followed everything, disappeared down the hallway with her in it. No, she did not rise up that evening and walk away from the chair that kept her hostage. We did not see her fully healed that day when we prayed with simple and sincere faith. But over the next seven years of service as her children's pastor, I saw her start to talk, have fewer and fewer bandages, and come to the brink of death, only to be pulled back to life numerous times. She also learned to speak three languages and was eventually able to walk without the aid of any device. And that little group of prayer warriors—they continue to have great faith for the seemingly impossible.



Children are quick learners; we often underestimate their comprehension and limitless faith. As people of influence in children's lives, we need to nurture these precious qualities before they are strangled by the doubts, disappointments and sin of our world.

Show Them

The children's ministry of a local church has the unique privilege of coming alongside parents to encourage and equip them, and to reinforce the godly values and lifestyle that are hopefully being modelled in the home.

As a leader, you can show the children you serve how to be caring and compassionate. The way they see you treat others will impact how they choose to treat others. Share with the children you serve about ways in

which you have been able to show care and compassion to others. Tell them about different ways that you volunteer or how you have helped someone during the week. If you sponsor a child, show them a picture and letters from that child. If you've been on a mission trip, tell them about it.

A children's ministry can provide parents with opportunities for family service projects like visiting the local food bank and helping sort food or organizing a Christmas shoebox project for orphans. As a children's ministry leader, you can facilitate opportunities for parents, alongside their own children, to model what it means to care for others. There are many volunteer opportunities within a church where families can serve together. It might take a little extra work and planning on the part of your church leadership team, but the life impact will be more than worth it. When children see their parents serving others, they want to do so as well. Parents may feel at a loss when it comes to knowing how to intentionally model care and compassion for others to their children. By providing resources such as books, articles, movies, projects and real-life stories to equip and inspire parents, a children's ministry will be teaching parents to foster their own methods of raising kids who care for others.

For children from non-believing homes, a local church and its children's ministry may be the only godly input in their lives. While unsaved parents may be reluctant to attend church with their children, all parents ultimately want to raise their children to be "good people." By including unsaved parents in service projects, you will not only invite them into relationship with other believers, but also expose them to kingdom living and hopefully lead them to Jesus.

Do With Them

Children especially learn by doing—some better than others. Repetition is key to learning. The more opportunities we can give to children to show care and compassion to others, the greater their capacity will be to do so on their own. A private Christian school in British Columbia has "service" as one of its core values. Starting in preschool, students learn to serve one another, their school, their community, their nation, and the world. "Service" is included in the classroom curriculum. Preschoolers can be seen picking up garbage from the school grounds on a weekly basis—an act of service that suits their skill level. By the time a student reaches their final years of high school, their servanthood has been developed to a place where they can participate in a short-term missions

team going overseas. Their progression of “doing” is systematic, age-related and consistent.

Children become easily frustrated if they cannot “do something.” Creating opportunities for service is a great avenue to offer children a means of expressing care and compassion toward others.

There are so many practical things you can get children involved in so they can exercise their gifts of care. Community cleanup projects, visiting shut-ins and nursing homes, baking cookies for the police department or hospital emergency staff, mailing get-well cards to the sick in the church, delivering gifts to the homeless shelter, helping new immigrant families to fit in, sending a care package to a missionary family … the list is endless. Be creative. Find opportunities where your church or your community are already involved and co-ordinate the efforts of your children.

Sometimes it is easier to serve the stranger than our brother, but we must emphasize to children how important it is that a heart of compassion and care start at home. Help children find ways to show care to their families first, then to their schools, their church, their community, their country, and the nations.

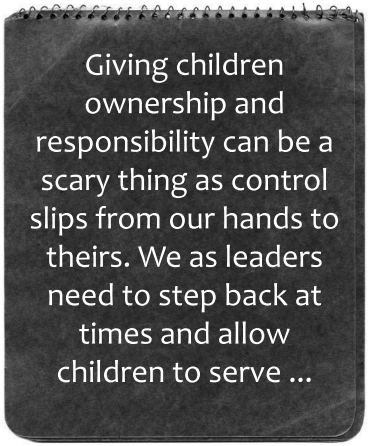
Let Them

In 1 Samuel, we read about Samuel’s early life. We often tend to focus on chapter 3, where the boy Samuel hears the voice of God calling out and he awakens Eli the priest. However, turn back a page or two to chapter 2, verses 18-21. Although Samuel lived at the tabernacle and served the Lord there as a child, his parents, having released him into service, were still a part of his life. If we simply show children how to be caring and include them in compassionate acts, yet do not allow them to take ownership of their own responses and initiate acts of compassion themselves, these things won’t naturally become a part of who they are. The boy Samuel was given a responsibility; he was trained to fulfil it and he took ownership of his responsibility.

Giving children ownership and responsibility can be a scary thing as control slips from our hands to theirs. We as leaders need to step back at times and allow children to serve, leaving space for success and even failure. Ask kids about ways they can contribute; undoubtedly, you will hear a long list of things they can do. Perhaps there is a disaster relief project your church is a part of, a missions project, a community service

or another ministry within your church that serves the greater community. Or maybe there is a need within your congregation that the children you lead can assist with.

Work with your students to find a project that is manageable and something that they can relate to, understand and be passionate about. Including them in choosing the service project instantly breeds greater ownership. Consider having older children serve as the "project managers" and have a leader work with them on developing an action plan that the younger children can be a part of. Older children will not only feel valued, but will also learn important leadership skills. Set realistic, and maybe even faith stretching, goals. Give guidance, but do your best not to make all the decisions. There may be a margin for failure or struggle, but that is part of the learning process. Your responsibility can be more about conflict resolution. If things seem to be going off the track, then be sure to encourage, coach and celebrate successes! Some of the greatest and most successful food drives in our nation have been thought of and carried out as a result of a child's dream to change their world.



Reflect

In Jesus' day, the religious teachers had many different interpretations of Scripture and made up rules and regulations that were supposed to help people follow them. The complicated system of laws related to one's relationship with God and humanity. Read Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-31.

- What does Jesus say is the greatest command?
- How do you think this relates to raising kids who care about others?

How do you define "social justice?" How can we practice it with genuine acts of care which flow out of a believer's relationship with God? Does this make any sort of impact on raising kids who care? How?

Deuteronomy 6:7 is one short verse that gives a very clear command to parents about their role as the primary spiritual shaper in their child's life.

Write out this verse and circle all of the verbs.

- What are the action steps that God commands parents to be engaged in?
- How often should they be doing so?

Respond

No matter how we may choose to show care to others, we cannot separate it from the fact that God is the giver of life and love. An act of kindness done apart from God is an act of kindness with shades of the Creator. An act of kindness done in Jesus' name is an act that can lead to life transformation on the part of the giver, and maybe even the receiver. As we seek to raise kids who care about others, how can we do so effectively? Think about the following …

How do you show genuine care to others? What are others seeing you do on a public level?

How are you intentionally helping the children you lead to care for others?

Name some ways that you can encourage parents to foster in their children a sense of care and compassion for others.

List some practical ways by which the children you teach can express care for others …

- in their family
- in their church
- in their community
- in Canada
- in another country.

Module 10

Session 2

SESSION 2

Planning a Big Event

by Hailey Armoogan

It was the warmest February in recorded history. There wasn't a flake of snow in sight. The mountains rose spectacularly against the pristine blue sky, and the sparkling water of the Pacific Ocean flowed freely into the inlets surrounding Vancouver, British Columbia. It was a picture-perfect day in many ways as hundreds of thousands of people swarmed the streets, once congested with traffic, that were now pedestrian walkways. However, no one could deny the irony of the beautiful weather. The 2010 Winter Olympic Games were in Vancouver, and there was no snow!

As helicopters transported massive bins of snow from higher altitudes to Cypress Mountain to cover the hay bales that were substitutes for the usual base layer, nobody seemed to care about the lack of sub-zero weather. The party was in full swing. Whether one had a ticket to an Olympic event or not (the vast majority did not), the streets of Vancouver were teeming with people who simply wanted to take it all in. SkyTrain station ticket lines wrapped around buildings. Shattering every public transportation record ever set, there were not enough trains to shuttle the masses of people in and out of the heart of the city. For a city unaccustomed to massive world-class events but familiar with downtown brawls and violence, there was an unmistakable air of fraternal cheer. The thousands of police officers from across Canada who were offering security casually mingled with the crowds, even drawing cheers from onlookers as they engaged in impromptu games of street hockey outside of Canada House.

Smiles wreathed the faces of locals and international visitors alike, and no one shoved or cut into the three-hour plus lineups to enter pavilions. An inexplicable sense of togetherness, which has never occurred here before, permeated the streets of Vancouver.

The streets undulated in red and white, and the name *Canada* was liberally plastered on every available surface. A certain energy knit

strangers together. There was a sense that everyone shared in something greater than themselves—something far greater than the simple sum of the people present—and it left us all speechless. On the streets of downtown Vancouver that day, every individual knew that they were part of something historic and, remarkably, that they belonged right where they were.



Read

Our world is full of people desperate to belong to something greater than themselves. Yet the only thing that can truly satisfy that deep-seated need is to encounter the Creator of the universe and to discover the awe of His greatness and the fact that He adores us.

In recent decades, North American Christianity has become particularly individualistic. We proclaim and explain the gospel in very personal and individualized terms. We have specialized ministries and varieties of worship that cater to individual tastes and often segregate age groups. Although well intentioned, we have unfortunately slipped away from what God always intended for the people of God. He wants us as Christians to be a community—a group of people with a common purpose who belong to Him.

A “big event” has the power to create community through shared experience. Whether your event is geared toward the unchurched, your local congregation or an event in your city, the principles of planning an effective big event are the same. It’s interesting to note that the start of Jesus’ public ministry took place at a big event—a wedding—in a very public setting among friends and family. John 2:1–12 clearly shows us that He wasn’t planning this to be His public ministry breakout. Rather, He was called upon to meet a very practical need, which He did with apparently little fanfare. One might argue that the wedding planners failed to plan well. To run out of wine at a feast such as a wedding would reflect very poorly upon the hosts. Jesus’ miracle was intentional in that it provided wine, symbolic of joy in Jewish culture. It also circumvented a shameful situation and potential loss of social standing for the hosts due to their failure to provide adequate hospitality.

Events Need to Be Intentional

There is nothing more deflating than putting many hours of hard work

into a great event that is well received, only to realize upon evaluation that it bore no recognizable fruit. If we are simply interested in packing venues full of people, we have little to be concerned about. However, our mission is to represent Jesus, to go in His name, and to expand His kingdom. We have a greater mandate and responsibility than merely filling church gyms.

Big events provide an opportunity to intentionally gather people together for a specific purpose. Whether that purpose is to build community and care within a congregation, or to reach the unchurched and those whom you would not generally engage, big events can be effective tools. Whether it is held in a church facility or elsewhere, the key to any event is the sense of connection and relationship that is developed with and among its participants.

Intentional event planning considers the following questions:

Who is the event for?

As much as you may try to consider the needs and wants of the masses, no single event can do it all. Much of Jesus' recorded ministry seemed to take place among the crowds; however, His meatiest and most intimate teachings took place in the company of the twelve disciples. Even Jesus' ministry reflects the nuances between large events and smaller relationship settings.

When planning a big event, we must think about your target group. This will become key in the planning stages. Is the event for an entire congregation? A specific age group? Christians? Non-Christians? The greater community beyond the church?

What is the end goal of the event?

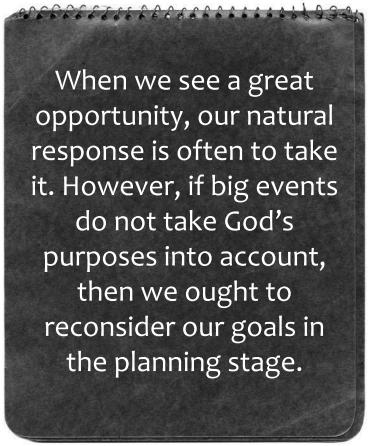
When planning an event, a great deal of time and effort can be saved by specifying exactly what it is that you want to accomplish. Are you trying to create a sense of community, convey a message, raise funds, serve a particular group or cause, celebrate an event, or create a platform that requires a response? Consider this question when you are planning the details of your event. If a particular detail does not serve the goal, then consider changing your focus and dedicating time and resources in that area of your planning.

Is it in keeping with the mission and values of the church and its children's ministry?

While many of our churches are organized into departments, the guiding vision and purposes of the church apply to all of its subgroups. A big event that is organized outside of these guiding purposes will be very difficult to plan, may be needlessly expensive, and is not likely to have long-lasting benefit. Events are not as effective when done in isolation and without support and input from other church ministry departments.

What will the event accomplish?

What is the end goal of the event? Is it to introduce people to Jesus? Is it to welcome the unchurched to be a part of your congregation? Is it to create stronger bonds of relationship between the generations within your congregation? Events can be varied, but they should all have a goal in mind. Not all goals are easily measurable by figures and statistics. For example, if our goal is to see people deepen their relationships with one another, you can measure the effectiveness of your event by the amount of easy interaction between attendees. If your goal is to get information into people's hands, you can measure your success by the amount of informational material that is distributed and what is communicated.



Events Need to Be Inspired

A well-known Christian leader once said that when they first started in full-time ministry they had hundreds of great ideas, but only about a dozen of them were from God. When we see a great opportunity, our natural response is often to take it. However, if big events do not take God's purposes into account, then we ought to reconsider our goals in the planning stage.

This is illustrated neatly in Exodus 33:12–23. Moses was no lightweight leader at this point in time. If we were to look at his resumé it would include things like: Prince of Egypt, statesman, negotiator, liberation leader, etc. Yet he desperately asks God: " ... *if you do think highly of me, show me your ways so that I may know you and so that you may really*

approve of me"(13:13, CEB). He also says: "*If you won't go yourself, don't make us leave here*" (13:15, CEB).

Anything we do in service to the Lord and for the expansion of His kingdom should be done prayerfully. God's timing is not always our timing. While we may see great potential, we will only labour in vain if God is not a part of our plans. God has given us creativity and ingenuity. He expects us to use them well. When inspired with a new idea, or perhaps during preparations for an annual event, take time to pray. Ask the Lord if it is truly something that He is asking you to do. If God is in it, He will make a way. This doesn't mean there won't be challenges, but He will be with you on the journey.

Opportunities

There is never a shortage of excuses to throw a party. Between the secular calendar and the Christian calendar, there are more than enough holidays to justify throwing an event. Every community has annual events that take place in which the church can also participate. National holidays, parades and special events are all opportunities for a church to serve its community by offering to host a big event. The opportunities to effectively draw in and connect with people are exhaustive. It is always helpful to do a little research about your neighbourhood and community. Who are your neighbours? What are their needs? If a local church is surrounded by low-income housing, then having an event with an entrance fee may not draw many people. However, offering a free summer BBQ or a community block party may encourage the same group to participate and provide an initial connection point.

Audience

In a post-Christian nation like Canada, we can no longer assume that people share a basic understanding of God and the church. We need to have a clear idea of who our target audience is. If we are reaching out to children who have had no exposure to Christianity, then a Bible trivia game would not be appropriate. If most of the crowd at our big event are new Canadians, then references to TV shows and Western media may not be helpful. When Jesus spoke to religious officials, He quoted the Old Testament and traditions that they would be familiar with. When He spoke to the everyday labourer, He referenced everyday objects, nature, and things with which they were well acquainted. Jesus spoke to people in ways they would understand. He spoke the same message to two different groups in two very different ways. Jesus knew His audience.

Resources

Events do not need to cost a lot to be well done. Most companies and businesses plan on donating significant amounts of money and products to non-profit organizations each year. A good rule of thumb to keep in mind when looking for donated product is "The worst they can say is 'no.' " Flip through the phone book or do Internet searches for local businesses and manufacturers near your community that may be willing to donate to the event. Offer to include their name as an event sponsor on related publications or giveaway materials. Give the members of the congregation an opportunity to participate in the same way. Congregants are usually eager to support an event with resources as well. Always show thanks and appreciation when something is donated, provided at a discount, rented or borrowed. Always know your assets—the people and resources that are readily accessible. Read through the following familiar passages and note Jesus' assets: Matthew 15:32–39; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:5–15.

Valuable resources may be a lot closer than we think. Build relationships with other churches and swap equipment. If another church has a bouncy castle, borrow it from them. Encourage church members to sponsor things, such as food or prizes. A venue can look amazing without spending a lot of money. Decorations can be simple and creative.

Logistics

Attention to detail will make or break any event. Anything that is well executed is well planned. Not all of us are detail oriented, so it is always good to surround ourselves with people whose strengths are different from ours. While you may be responsible for the actual planning of an event, enlist a few others to be a part of the planning team who will help tweak the initial plan and make it even better. Volunteer identification, decorating, the registration process, food preparation, rentals, teardown, etc., are all details that contribute to the overall success of a big event. The key is not to become so consumed with the details that you lose sight of the people you hope to impact and the purpose of your event. Content should never be sacrificed for frills.

Write everything down! The planning you do for one event will become the template for the next. Good recordkeeping will make future event planning easier as the monies spent and quantities used become clear.

Be sure to have checklists that keep track of what is done and what

needs to be done. Making reliable team players responsible for specific tasks will greatly ease the burden of leadership and develop new leaders at the same time. Planning and hosting a large event knits volunteers together in a unique way. When we gather people together to combine their efforts, skills and gifts, we see the body of Christ at work in a powerful and transforming way.

Follow Up Plan

You should know your desired outcome before you begin. What do you want people to hear and experience before they walk away? Are you inviting them back to something else like a Sunday service or a midweek program? How will you achieve this outcome? Will attendees receive a follow up phone call, e-mail, or card? If you plan on being a part of people's lives beyond the conclusion of your event, then you need to invite them into greater relationship and give them an opportunity to invite you to be a part of their lives. A big event can provide an initial contact or introduction to the children's ministry and local church. Follow up can provide a relational connection that is personal. Events should have a means of gathering contact information and finding ways to ensure that contact will continue. A big event can also serve as a community builder, both for your church and the greater community. A local church with a healthy sense of church community that genuinely loves and cares for one another will be a church that embraces the whole community.



Evaluation can be frustrating, but if it is done properly, with due credit and humility, then it can be of great help in planning your next event.

Write a journal entry that answers the following questions. Think about how you can plan future events with some of your answers in mind.

- How do you go about evaluating your events?
- What was the greatest event you've ever attended?
- Have you ever thrown a party you are very proud of?
- What made it great?
- How do you know when you've put on a great event?
- How do you measure success?

Respond

This lesson is not intended to be a complete guide to planning a big event. It is intended to offer practical advice for planning a successful event. The success of an event cannot always be measured by the number of people in attendance. Rather, it should be measured by the quality of the fruit it produces.

In terms of event options, you are limited only by your imagination. It's always helpful to keep a file of event ideas. Whenever you run across interesting ideas, file them in a physical file folder or in a computer file for later use. Events that leave an impact often have a consistent theme or thread woven throughout. From the moment that participants receive an invitation to the event to the post event follow up material, a consistent theme and message should be evident.

Making use of the suggestions above, gather together as much knowledge and understanding as you can about your church and your community. Review your church's mission statement and identify specific needs that are present in your community. Draw together a plan for one event that suits both your church and community. Use the headings below to organize your proposal:

- Event:
- Date:
- Time:
- Venue:
- Objective:
- Audience:
- Content:
- Logistics:
- Resources:
- Follow up:
- Evaluation:

notes

Module 10

Session 3

SESSION 3

Children Sharing Their Faith

by Hailey Armoogan

Emily had a little friend with whom she regularly played after school. They would swing on the backyard swing set and chat effusively about things that only six-year-old little girls can gush about. Emily's mom could see them through the kitchen window, their heads leaning together as they chattered furiously. More than their little legs were pumping them through the air on the swings.

One afternoon, following the call to come in to clean up for dinner, Emily happily bounced into the house with an announcement. Her little friend had asked Jesus to come into her life! Emily's mother stopped what she was doing and turned to her daughter. "What do you mean?" she asked, a little startled. Emily proceeded to tell her mother how she had been telling her little friend about Jesus as they sat on the swing. She had explained to her friend how much Jesus loved her and wanted to be her best friend and that, if she wanted a friendship with Jesus, she needed to ask Him to forgive her for the bad things she had done and ask Jesus into her life. Then she needed to try her best to love and obey Jesus. Emily's mother stood stunned as her six-year-old related how she had led her little friend to the Lord and wondered exactly how her young daughter had put it all together.

A few days later, while swinging on the swing and chatting, Emily's friend had some exciting news as well. This young girl had shared with her mother what Emily had told her about Jesus, and her mother said she wanted Jesus in her life as well! This exciting news led to Emily's parents connecting with the friend's mother, inviting the family to church that Sunday, joining them in their journey of becoming lifelong followers of Jesus.

Can God use a child to share His good news message? Absolutely! Do

we have a role as children's ministry workers in preparing them to do so? Absolutely!



Read

We are all very familiar with statistics that indicate that most people who come to a saving knowledge of Jesus as Lord and Saviour do so before the age of 18. However, there is also this compelling fact: many parents come to faith as a result of their child's asking Jesus into their life or their child's involvement in a church ministry program. Take a moment to consider how many unchurched adults have been exposed to the gospel message or a community of faith because they attended a church program or event in which their child or a child close to them had been involved. The opportunities to touch the lives of those with whom we would otherwise not come into contact are staggering when you add the "kid" factor.

Consider the impact that a Spirit-filled child with a heart after God can have among their peers. Have you ever listened to the conversations children have with one another? They are passionate as they talk about things that are important to them. When a child has a life-altering encounter with God and embarks on a daily adventure of being a Jesus follower, they will tell everyone they can find about the exciting things that are happening in their life. There is nothing more compelling than the simple faith of a child and their innocent eagerness to share with others what they have learned and experienced.

We live in a culture of paradoxical childhood. Children are exposed to mature adult themes and experiences at a younger age while young adulthood is almost an extension of adolescence, with an increasing delay of adult responsibilities and maturity than in previous generations. At no other time in history have children been so well entertained in North American culture. While our children are exposed to many stimuli, these experiences are not necessarily teaching them life skills or preparing them for the calling God has on their life or the mission to which He has called them.

There is often pressure to "compete" with all that vies for children's attention. In our entertainment driven world, more and more emphasis is being placed on "relevance," which has a multitude of meanings,

or on a certain ministry look that appeals to an entertainment hungry generation. In many ways it's like the famous "Pavlov's dog" theory of cause and response. A bright, flashy, media driven children's ministry presentation elicits a favourable and positive response because it follows a formula of conditioning to which our culture has molded children. While there is nothing wrong with a polished children's ministry that effectively uses tools and resources to reach, teach and disciple children, it is the content of our message and its transforming power that we need to be most concerned about. If we hope to help children be bright reflections of Jesus who can draw their peers to the Light of the world, then we must usher them beyond today's culture, as they know it, and challenge and equip them to be "culture setters" rather than culture followers.

Children are naturally tenacious, fearless and eager. They do not need to be convinced to share about Jesus; they just naturally will if He is active and at work in their lives. But if faith is something that is talked about only on Sundays and not an active part of daily living, then the desire to share it diminishes. A child's ability to understand is far greater than we often give them credit for. Their ability to retain information, repeat it, and then apply it is ripe during childhood. Their hearts and minds are eager to be filled; if they are not filled with the things of God, they will be filled with other things. While children do not possess the same skills and abilities as adults, the same Holy Spirit who dwells within an adult also dwells within a child. God wants to use children just as much as He wants to use adults. Are we truly helping to prepare the children to whom we minister become ambassadors for Jesus today? Or are we underestimating their potential? Perhaps we need to consider raising the bar of expectation that we have for our children in terms of what they can truly learn and live out when it comes to being devoted followers of Jesus.

Rooted in the Word

In a world of no absolutes, our children need to know that there is infallible truth in the Bible. If we say that the Bible is the source of all truth and provides guidance for life, but rarely or never teach children how to use, know, understand and apply the Bible, then it is a sad contradiction.

Read Proverbs 2. What instructions does it give beyond just Scripture memorization?

While addressing the Corinthians, Paul wrote, *"I gave you milk, not solid*

food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready" (1 Corinthians 3:2). When it comes to spiritual food, there is no limit on age. A child is as able to hear and digest the "meat of the Word" as much as an adult. The method of delivery may vary, but its life-giving power is the same. Often we simplify Bible lessons to be more understandable for children; however, we must be careful not to water down God's Word so much that it loses its message. If we are simply telling stories rather than conveying life-transforming truth, we need to reconsider what and how we are teaching. By teaching children the uncompromising Word of God in such a way that they can understand it, be challenged by it and apply it daily, they will be able to live righteously with confidence and will share it with their friends.

The Power of Prayer

By helping children understand that prayer is a conversation with God that comes in many forms, they can better personalize their faith and be more comfortable in communicating with their heavenly Father.

Children are persistent and trusting. When they pray for something, they totally believe that the prayer will be answered. Their fervour and honesty no doubt please the heart of God. Children's ministry leaders have the unique privilege of helping children develop a life of prayer. While parents can nurture their child's prayer life in the private setting of the home, children's ministry leaders often help develop a child's prayer life among their peers in a more public setting. Sometimes there can be a tendency to make prayer an event rather than a regular part of our walk with God. If the only time children pray together is at a "scheduled" time in the program, then we may not be equipping them as best we can. Provide opportunities in small group or relational settings for children to pray for their friends. Children's ministry leaders can share prayer needs from their own lives with the children as well and have the children pray for them. Pray at "unscheduled" times—when there is a sense of prompting or a time when prayer comes naturally, such as when a child mentions sickness in their family or the Bible lesson talks about needing God's help in our daily lives. By helping children understand that prayer is a conversation with God that comes in many forms, they can better personalize their faith and be more comfortable in communicating with their heavenly Father.

A Living Witness

Children are naturally experiential. The need to see and do is a key part of learning for them. Throughout Scripture we are reminded again and again how tactile God is. Flip through the accounts of the Israelites' wilderness wanderings and you will repeatedly find God instructing the nation of Israel to take stones and build a monument commemorating a site where He did something miraculous. People need tangible things to remind them of the power and work of the invisible God. Children especially need practical things to help them understand who God is, the gospel message and how one follows Jesus.

Children's ministers cannot simply be transferrers of information, as true as the information may be. We must teach through words, actions and attitudes the truths that we hope the children we serve will emulate and make their own. Repetition is important, but so is explanation with real examples that children can relate to. Older children can participate in discussion about more abstract concepts, while younger children are asked to memorize verses that are explained to them. They then have an opportunity to repeat the verse and its meaning back to their teacher.

Children can effectively reach their peers when they are discipled well. They will share the good news in their own unique way, through words and actions; however, they will be most confident in being a living witness of Jesus Christ, alive and active in them, if they are nurtured by the Word, expectant in prayer, and honest in their daily Christian walk.



In Matthew 18, there is an interesting discussion between Jesus and His disciples before the gathered crowd. Read verses 1 through 14 in its entirety, ignoring any section headings and verse numbers. Keep in mind that chapters, verses and titles were not part of the original text, but were added a few hundred years ago.

What are some ways that we might cause children to stumble away from Jesus?

What value does the text indicate Jesus places on children as part of the kingdom family?

Respond

Making disciples of others is a lifelong commitment to an instruction that Jesus gave us as His followers. Every believer—big or small, young or old—has a varying level of spiritual maturity. Some children reach a greater depth of spiritual maturity by age 10 than some adults do by age 50. Nonetheless, it is important that all believers, young or old, share their faith with others so Christ's kingdom can be expanded. Spiritual vitality cannot be programmed or formulated, but by leading the children we serve into greater depths of relationship and experience with God, we help equip them to share their faith with greater confidence, passion and effectiveness.

How actively are you discipling children within your children's ministry to be more effective disciple makers?

How often do you spend time actively and personally equipping your students to share God's plan of salvation with others their age? Journal what that looks like.

How is your church equipping parents to be the primary spiritual nurturers of children so that they will grow to be strong disciple makers and people of faith? In your direct area of ministry, how are you doing this?

When a parent is not a believer, or not actively involved in their child's spiritual development, where do you see the church and the Children's Ministry department fitting in?

Does your church use a particular resource or curriculum for discipling children? How is it effective? Is there another curriculum or resource that could be even more effective in helping you raise up young, strong disciples of Christ?

notes

Module 10

Session 4

SESSION 4

Ministering to Children at Risk

by Hailey Armoogan

The phrase “at risk” has many definitions depending on whom you speak with. To a school teacher, a child who is at risk may be a student who runs the risk of academic failure and dropping out of school. To a social worker, a child at risk may be a child in danger of abuse in their living situation. To a children’s ministry leader, a child at risk may be an immigrant child at risk of cultural depravation.

So who is at risk? What are they at risk for? As there are many different applications to the term and it is quite broad, for our purposes we will focus on at risk children using the following definition:

> “children who are being endangered, as from exposure to disease or from a lack of parental or familial guidance and proper health care.”

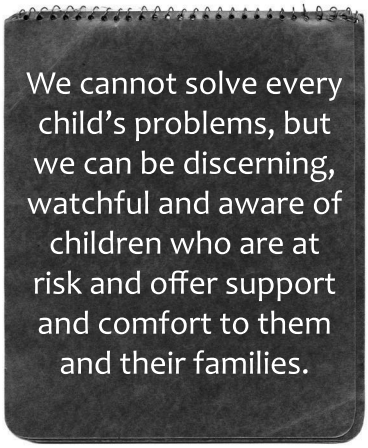
When children lack one and or all of these things, the outcomes are the “crisis,” which can manifest itself in such forms as truancy, poor academic performance, withdrawal and, in more serious cases, addiction, crime and poverty.

If we were to look at any group of children, in any context, we would find most of them to be at risk for something. We are all vulnerable, but no one is as vulnerable as a child. Children look to their caregivers to lead and direct them, to protect and shelter them from harm. By identifying children who are potentially at risk and/or children who are in at risk situations, we can be more effective in our care of and ministry to them and hopefully help them to avoid crises. Our ultimate goal is to help them solve their problems or improve their situation, or to act as a bridge to organizations that can offer help. We can be the hands of Jesus extended to them and help guide them toward God’s love.

Read

Identifying Children at Risk

A child who is at risk is on the verge of experiencing crisis, in the midst of a crisis, or has already been through a crisis. Crisis is anything that strips away a child's basic needs such as safety, health, security, family relationships, or anything that inspired comfort or confidence. As children's ministry workers in the local church, we are not professionally trained counsellors or child psychologists. We cannot solve every child's problems, but we can be discerning, watchful and aware of children who are at risk and offer support and comfort to them and their families. We should be a safe place for kids in crisis and a connection point for kids in need to find the resources that will help them get better. We must act out our faith and show kids in crisis the love of God.



Within the context of the Canadian local church, we will look at five areas of children at risk that we may encounter. There are many more, but these may be the most common situations found within our children's ministries.

Culturally At Risk

On average, Canada welcomes 250,000 new immigrants to its shores each year, not including those who enter with "refugee status." The fastest growing churches in our Fellowship are cultural churches in urban settings. The nations have literally come to Canada. But are they in our churches? Take a look at those who live in the neighbourhoods around our churches, and then consider who makes up our congregations. Hopefully, our congregations are reflective of neighbourhoods in which they reside. Moving neighbourhoods, cities and even provinces can be traumatic for any child, but imagine moving countries. Imagine being unable to communicate in a very foreign world that holds nothing you recognize. Any child in our children's ministry who has emigrated from another nation could experience fear, uncertainty, excitement, anxiety and loss. In a society so ruled by pop culture, it is hard for someone new to fit in if

they have no point of reference. An immigrant child may grieve the life, family, friends and culture that they left behind and understood. They might also have left their country due to some crisis such as war or natural disaster. While we may not be able to relate to what they have experienced, we can certainly assure them that they are welcome in Canada. We can learn things about their country and culture and include these facts in discussion, activities or missions emphases. A child is culturally at risk when they are severed from the culture they know and immersed in one that is foreign. If our children's ministry relies solely on pop culture to connect us with our kids, then perhaps we need to reevaluate what it means to be clear communicators of the Word.

Socio-economically At Risk

Poverty in Canada may look different from poverty in Third World countries, but it is equally hurtful. As of June 2010, fifteen per cent of Canadian children were living in poverty, ranking Canada 20th out of 30 of the world's wealthiest nations as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A child may be at risk of living in poverty conditions due to unwise choices by their caregivers. A recent poll found that people were more willing to go without a refrigerator than without cable television. While children from lower income families may have many practical needs such as healthy food, clothing and other essentials, they also need consistency and positive role models. Children from low socio-economic households are looking to us for acceptance and some framework of boundaries. Our ministry programs need to be accessible to them. We must not let their lack of resources shut them out. They want to be treated like other kids and be given the same opportunities to learn and achieve.

At Risk Families

The nuclear family is a thing of the past according to many sociologists. Canadian family structures are crumbling and morphing into vastly different forms than were common even 30 years ago. Whereas the nuclear family has been the norm in Canada since the industrial revolution, the "norm" now shares space with single-parent families, blended families, reconstituted families, and same-sex families. The church needs to be proactive rather than reactive in its response to these groups—if the time for being proactive has not passed. Children who have fractured relationships with parents and other significant family members may look to a children's ministry and church to replace those relationships. If we are unable to see these children as unique individuals

rather than just names on our attendance sheet, we will more than likely lose them to other influences that numb the pain of their loneliness and don't fill their needs the way a relationship with Jesus can. Children who come from seriously broken homes need strong, loving examples to help them build skills in forming relationships and social attachments.

At Risk Emotionally

Inner wounds can be as painful as physical ones. Children facing possible emotional crises may be awaiting the death of a loved one, might have been through a traumatic family divorce, or may be subject to bullying or abuse. They may not be able to verbalize what they are feeling or even understand it. Children who have suffered trauma at a very young age don't even realize that they are acting out due to a deep emotional wound they may not even remember. Emotionally at risk children may also be experiencing verbal abuse and feel trapped by the words of others. As children's ministry leaders, we can be discerning and lead these children to a place of hope and healing in Jesus.

At Risk Physically

Children who are physically at risk may suffer from poor nutrition, obesity or some form of physical abuse. Your church must have a policy in place regarding protocols to follow if there is evidence or suspicion that a child is being abused. Talking about any form of abuse with a child is difficult. Children are extremely ashamed of what has happened to them as they often feel it is their fault. Although we may not be able to control or even know a child's exact circumstances, we can give them hope and remind them that God is always there for them. To a child who has experienced great suffering, a loving and all-powerful God may not make a lot of sense to them—as surely He could have kept them from harm. Why God allows some things and not others is not a question we can answer. We do have a responsibility to connect these children with people and organizations that can help, but we can also introduce these hurting children to the Father of the fatherless and the Protector of the weak.

Understanding Children's Responses to Trauma

What is Trauma?

Trauma is precipitated by a state of crisis. Children in crisis have all experienced trauma, although their experiences will vary.

Trauma is defined as:

- The experience of a sudden, unexpected and abnormal life-changing event or series of events.
- An extraordinary, frightening event that overwhelms the victim with feelings of terror, helplessness or loss of control
- A circumstance that always involves loss, whether physical, emotional or both.

There are two categories of childhood trauma:
Type I – A sudden, distinct traumatic experience. Dealing with loss caused by trauma may take years, but the trauma itself is not ongoing.

Type II – Repeated traumatic ordeals that are ongoing and longstanding. Victims of this type of trauma generally avoid talking about themselves.

A child's response to trauma will be unique to that child. However, there are some common characteristics. Children in crisis have all experienced loss and are moving through a process of grief. There are several characteristics that children display when they have experienced serious trauma. They often fail to develop basic trust and healthy attachments. They suffer feelings of hopelessness and loss of control. They are often passive or unresponsive, depressed, withdrawn, angry (directed inwardly or outwardly), afraid, and can seem to lack empathy. They also display indifference to pain, a lack of concentration, an inability to "play," and even developmental delays.

Resilience

Every child will handle crisis and trauma differently. There are many factors that influence a child's response such as age, gender, personality and resilience factors. The Grotberg model of resilience outlines some factors that influence a child's resilience and helps us to understand why each child responds differently to the same crisis. There are three suggested categories:

"I have" factors—What a child has in the way of a support structure outside of themselves. This factor measures the environment in which the child lives, including family, school and church networks.

"I am" factors—These include the feelings, beliefs, attitudes and strengths of the child—who they are and who they understand themselves to be. We cannot create these factors, but we can strengthen them.

"I can" factors—These are the coping mechanisms and interpersonal skills that a child acquires to deal with the stresses of life. New skills are learned and added as new stresses are encountered, and each success builds self-confidence in their ability to face the future.

A healthy local church is well equipped to help at risk children build resilience to circumstances that may be beyond their control. By providing a loving, welcoming and intentional ministry to children and their families, you can be a part of the healing and liberating work that God wants to do in their lives.



It is often easy to label children or get caught up in the "doings" and "happenings" of children's ministry so that the needs of a child unwittingly become secondary. Jesus was familiar with needy people and individuals in crisis. Much of Jesus' recorded ministry dealt with people in crisis.

Read Luke 8:40-56. Make a list of all the crisis and trauma that Jesus was dealing with. How did He handle the situations and the people's needs?

How are you prepared as a leader to meet the needs that arise from crisis and trauma?

Are there any ways in which you could be better prepared? Or more aware?



Think about the children to whom you minister, one by one. If you can, write down their names and one thing you know about each of them. Put a star beside the names of children you know are at risk. This should be a fact that you already know or have been made aware of. Write down one way that you feel your children's ministry and local church could better help each child at risk to develop resilience. Look at the five "at risks," keeping in mind that there are many more. Think about specific responses that you and other children's ministry workers could have to children in these various crises. While you may not be familiar with each

circumstance, try to think proactively rather than reactively so that you have a plan in place before crisis arises.

The majority of this session has been taken from *Creating Hope For Children In Crisis*, by Cherilyn Orr (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 2010), 10-14. A comprehensive course on the subject of “Children at Risk” is offered by the School of Children and Family Ministry at Vanguard College in Edmonton, Alberta.

notes

notes

Module 11

Ministering to Children and Their Families



Module 11
Session 1

SESSION 1

The Family, the Church and Faith

by Graham Greenwood

Do you remember the moment when you held your firstborn child in your arms? Didn't it feel like a precious gift sent down from heaven just for you? Along with that ecstatic joy instantly comes an overwhelming sense of responsibility. After all, you are about to raise and train the fathers and mothers of your grandchildren. They could be your greatest legacy in this world!

God did not indend for us to do it alone. Families are blessed to be able to partner with the church in this great task. Throughout Scripture, we find children committing their lives to Christ and growing in the faith, and it is in the context of community. It seems that religious education was not the sole responsibility of the temple officials, the family, or great spiritual mentors; it took place every day among the normal activities of God's people. Deuteronomy 6:5–9 clearly states our divine calling as Christian communities:

> *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*



Read

We need to view children's programs through the lens of the scriptural patterns for faith development. Faith is meant to be an individual, family and community affair. All three are important, and what brings strength to the family and community faith experience is their intergenerational

nature. The younger need the knowledge and wisdom of the older, while the older need the challenge, energy and idealism of the younger.

God instituted families as the basic building block of society and the church. Families are by nature intergenerational; children all have parents and grandparents. In the book of Deuteronomy, parents are charged with the raising of their children in the knowledge and fear of God (Deuteronomy 6). The process of faith development includes the church and other institutions, but it is rooted in the family.

It is important to understand the context of the Deuteronomy 6 passage: Moses is in his final chapter of leadership over Israel, and the people are at the end of their 40 years of wandering in the desert. The community's memory is filled with accounts of God's miraculous protection and provision, the awe-inspiring presence of God as the terms of the covenant were revealed, the building of the tabernacle, and the establishment of the priesthood. While those who left Egypt had died, the generation that was to take the Promised Land grew up with God supplying daily food (manna), wore clothes that never wore out, and followed a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They defeated enemies far more numerous and better equipped than they themselves.

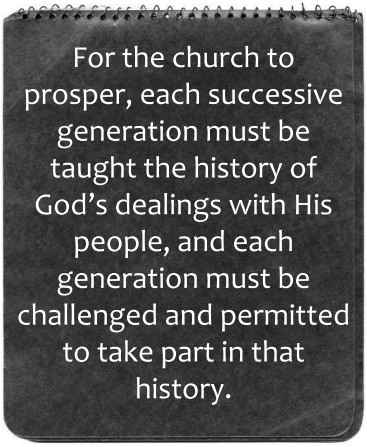
God taught the Israelites to trust in and rely on Him; if they did so, He would be their protector and would bless them. Moses duly warned them that these lessons must be passed on to their children and grandchildren, or the nation would lose their way. Parents were not to ascribe their success to hard work, education or luck, but to the faithfulness and blessing of God.

Moses was preparing the people to raise children in the Promised Land. These children were going to grow up living in houses they did not build and enjoying food they did not plant. God knew that without proper training, both in knowledge and in attitude, the blessings of the land would corrupt the people. They were occupying a land not because they deserved it, but because God loved them.

Moses, the one who led the people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, the one who had stood before God on behalf of the people so many times and been charged with teaching, rebuking and training the people in God's ways, was not going into the Promised Land. His time was coming to an end, and he was deeply concerned that the people not forget the lessons they had learned, often painfully.

And so, in that context Moses, gave this vital command generally to the whole community, and specifically to parents. As a nation, Israel had a vested interest in the spiritual training of the next generation because it would rise or fall on the collective decisions of its citizens. Parents had a personal interest in setting their children up for success, wanting to see them personally succeed and understand that the blessings they received were just that—blessings.

Raising children who honoured God was a shared responsibility. Parents needed to take the lead and provide the individual instruction. They needed to take advantage of those "teachable moments" and lead homes of faith. Israel had a responsibility as a community to pull itself together to honour God in worship, and in times of specific remembrance and celebration such as the Passover.



What is important to note is that as Moses (and, subsequently, Joshua) gave instruction to the community about the ceremonies and rituals, it was very often for the reason of teaching children. These great community feasts and the symbolic altars built were not for the adults. They were holy object lessons meant to stir the next generation and teach them the ways of God.

As we consider the roles of the church and of the family, we need to realize that it is not an "either/or" discussion, but rather "both/and". For the church to prosper, each successive generation must be taught the history of God's dealings with His people, and each generation must be challenged and permitted to take part in that history. Children need to grow up hearing the stories and being part of the community. The church must actively include them in the life of the faith community.

Parents are not off the hook, however. Joshua, who actually leads the Israelites into the Promised Land, challenges the nation with the statement, " ... *as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*." Essentially, Joshua is telling people that regardless of what they decide, his family will honour and serve God, and train their children in

righteousness. Parents need to take similar responsibility for their own household; they cannot blame the church (or culture) for failing in their role as parents.

Although parents cannot delegate responsibility for the discipleship of their children to the church, the church body does have a significant role to play in three key areas:

- Supporting and encouraging parents in their primary role of teaching and training their children.
- Welcoming children into the church community and providing an appropriate place for worship, meaningful teaching, and opportunity for Christian friendship.
- Reaching out to all children, regardless of background. Train and disciple them with a view to help them develop a lifelong, transformational relationship with Christ.

It is important to note, in James' epistle, that "true religion" is the care of widows and orphans. We often think of this in material terms (which we should), but we can't afford to forget that these families, and the individuals in them, need special care and support from the church.

Families are the greatest object lesson of our relationship with Christ. When operating as God intended, they are a sacred place of unconditional love and irrevocable identity. We chuckle at the expression that you can choose your friends but not your family. We belong to a family not because of any personal skill, ability, wealth or act, but because of the blood ties we have with certain individuals. Genuine faith and Christian commitment shine, both in our family and in the body of Christ, for our faith is about personal devotion to Christ, expressed through grace and mercy. God loves us for who we are in Christ rather than for how Christlike we are. He loves us, no matter what. We are called to be Christlike for His purposes, for those around us, and for the sake of the children and grandchildren who come after us.



1. Spend time reflecting on your personal faith journey. Which early relationships in your life helped or hindered your faith?
2. While some of these modules and sessions centre on the leadership of public ministry, the New Testament is clear that

our credibility as leaders in the church rests on how we lead our own families. How are the love, grace and mercy of Christ expressed in your home? What do others observe through your family when you are out in public or at church?

3. Read Deuteronomy 6 and consider some ways that we can implement the intent of this command in our contemporary context.
4. Journal your thoughts. Listen intently to the voice of the Holy Spirit as you reflect on this passage.



Respond

1. Identify one concrete step you can implement this week to strengthen your family's faith.
2. Identify the ways your church currently welcomes the participation of children in church life. Celebrate the things you are doing well. Are there other ways children could be effectively included? Write down your thoughts. Consider sharing these with church leadership who may be able to help implement your recommendations. Be aware of God's timing and your need to submit to those in authority.
3. Look for three prompts to have Deuteronomy 6 faith conversations outside the context of organized ministry programs.

notes

Module 11

Session 2

SESSION 2

The Family Today and Implications for Ministry

by Graham Greenwood

As we discussed in the previous session, the responsibility for the spiritual teaching of children is shared between parent and church. Neither can afford to delegate their responsibility to the other as the dynamic interdependence between our personal faith and our participation in a community of faith is essential to the church's vibrancy and effectiveness in witness, for strengthening individuals, and for accountability.

As we consider the format and structure of our ministries, the social changes of the past decades cannot be ignored. There are several that have had significant impact on our models of ministry and the expectations that we place on parents. We must continually acquaint ourselves with the circumstances to which we minister—the stresses and challenges each family faces. We must be constantly aware of our situation so that we can adapt our ministry to best meet the needs of the changing family, and to ensure that our ministries are accessible, given the daily stresses of family life. Family structures, the working family, organized recreation, and suburbanization have all shaped the context of ministry to families; and must be acknowledged and considered as we shape our children's ministries.

It is important that we realize these trends are real and that they affect the church in profound ways. To assist in understanding these trends, let's examine each one.



Read

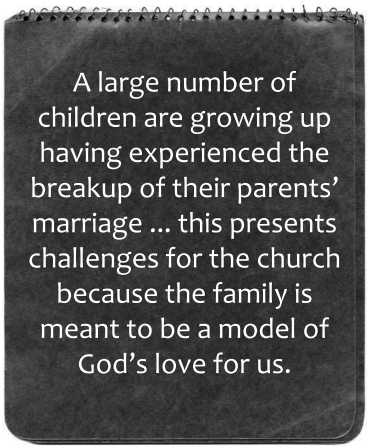
Family Structures

A large number of children are growing up having experienced the

breakup of their parents' marriage. This is the result of an ever-changing society and culture which also brings changes in the Canadian legal system. On its own, this presents challenges for the church because the family is meant to be a model of God's love for us. Children who have experienced their parents' divorce are saddled with significant long-term emotional and relational challenges.

A single-parent family is not always the result of a divorce or death. The reality is that it may have been by choice. Increasing numbers of individuals are choosing to raise children as single parents, parents living in a common-law relationship, or as a same-sex couple.

The traditional nuclear model of the family, being two married parents and their children, is no longer today's norm. In fact, it is now the minority in Canada. Any assumptions about the families we minister to need to be flexible.



The Working Family

Perhaps the longest standing conflict with which all children's ministries, and particularly those that offer a mid-week program, wrestle is the balance between work, family and church. At the most basic level—particularly since the majority of parents in any family structure work outside the home—there is only so much time to be had outside of work hours for families to enjoy spending time with one another. There are chores to be done, homework to be finished, groceries to be bought, and plenty of work in the home to compete with the energies of working parents. These tasks, especially for working moms and dads, are often tacked on to the end of busy, stressful working days. It can seem, for many families, that church is just another drain of energy and another full slot on an already overflowing calendar. Church may also be viewed as simply another barrier to intimacy inside the family (A parent may think, *There are only a few hours between dinner and bedtime! When do I get to cuddle my kids?*).

You may need to step back and view your church, its programs and functions as an outsider. It may mean making your children's programs

more accessible by adapting your schedules and offering programs that appeal to the needs of the family. However, before you schedule time for families outside of the home, ensure that you are using the time that families spend at church effectively, and that you are not placing undue stress on valuable family time. The family is a gift of God. Families need to live in Christian community (which is where you come in), but they also need time to grow spiritually within their family unit. Parents need time to exercise their God-given gifts and responsibilities—building strong and healthy families and raising their children in the love of God. Families must have time, independently, to put their faith into practice.

Organized Recreation Programs

There is a growing perception that our children are not safe while unsupervised. This has diminished the role of the neighbourhood park and informal outdoor play and driven families to register their children in organized "recreational" programs to fill their evenings and weekends. The dream of a career in hockey, an Olympic medal, or a record deal can drive children and parents to previously unimagined levels of commitment and expense for what used to be mere recreational pursuits.

Child development research has come to support the value of athletics and the arts for success in development and social well-being. While it is possible to see these as "competing interests" for the church and children's ministries, they are also opportunities for children and families to live out their faith in very real ways, sharing God's love at every opportunity.

Suburbanization

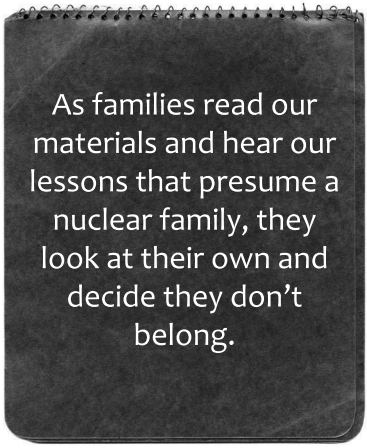
For the sake of our discussion, the primary effects that suburbanization has on the church are:

1. **Increased commutes for parents.**
   This results in less family and church time, especially in single-parent families or in families where both parents commute.
2. **The willingness to travel for better value or experience.**
   No longer is the community hardware store or the local church the default choice. We are now willing to drive greater distances for better value or experience.
3. **Focus on personal comfort.**
   Suburbanization has brought continually increasing house sizes and greater levels of luxury. With home improvements and the growing influence of technology, social media, families and/or family members can spend a great deal more time in isolation.

Implications of Social Change on Ministry

Combined, these four factors alone have a dramatic impact on the church. For example, as families have less time due to the increased pressures of work and the commuting they do, they are much more careful about how they allocate it. As the perception increases that participation (and success) in athletic or arts endeavours is essential to success in life, the time families do have may be invested there rather than in your church programs—if your church programs are set up in such a way as to alienate these families.

As we design our ministry programs, we need to take all of these trends into account. We need to decide what is really important (what can the church do *that no one else can?)* and focus on that. We may need to adjust our expectations so that our volunteers' time is spent on what really matters. This will increase our effectiveness during the time frame when families are in attendance at God's house.



Reflect

The community you live in and the church where you lead are unique. You have a unique history and a special calling. What worked in the past may not continue to work, and what works in another church and community may not be effective in yours. As a first step, reflect on your experiences with the church. What were some moments that stood out? How has your church historically been effective in connecting with the community? As you consider the list, try to identify what made those experiences possible.

Go through your catalogue of church programs and evaluate their sustainability. Pay particular attention to those that perpetually struggle to have enough volunteers, those in which children are participating, or programs that could possibly end when a key volunteer resigns. Are there any changes that should be made in order to effectively reach, teach, and disciple children and their families, and to allow for fellowship among the larger church family? Ask God to help you dream differently

about ways you could reach the families in your community with whom you have no present connection.

Respond

Take the church programs you value the most and make a note of the challenges they face in light of the changing culture. Dream about how you can reformat them to be successful in your context. This might be as simple as adjusting schedules so that commuting parents have time to get home, have supper, and get out the door again. It might mean switching a struggling daytime summer VBS to an evening so that parent leaders are able to participate (though this might mean that fewer people attend since parents appreciate the day care provided by a weeklong VBS). Sometimes something as simple as a name change or a new team of volunteers with fresh vision and energy can turn a ministry around. Take steps to engage the interests and family structures that are prevalent in your community. As the church, we must be salt and light where God has placed us.

Consider dreaming a bit bigger. You might start a recreational hockey league for kids where the focus is on fun, not winning. God is more than aware of the challenges you face and will give you the creativity and resources you need to fulfil the Great Commission. Ask Him to guide you and let Him lead you!

One of the most important things before changing any ministry is to make it a matter of prayer. Go to God with your dreams and challenges. Rely on Him for wisdom and direction. Pray for dedicated workers and committed families. Rest in God's timing, being careful not to run ahead or lag behind the vision He is giving you and the leadership of your church. In the middle of a rapidly changing culture, God can give you favour to see a great harvest for His kingdom.

Module 11

Session 3

SESSION 3

The Place of Parents in Ministry

by Graham Greenwood

In session 1 of this module, we learned that parents and the church have a shared responsibility for the spiritual development of their children. In session 2, we considered the realities in which the contemporary family lives and the changing landscape that affects them. In this session, we will consider what a healthy "intergenerational" ministry could look like. Specifically, we will consider how parents should be involved in the life of the church. This means that we must recast our ministries in such a way that we meet the needs of the people we lead in a healthy, scriptural fashion. Church needs to be a positive, renewing experience for all family members, and children need to be valued members of the church.

Parents need to be involved in Sunday morning ministries. We must do three things in order to make this happen. First, we need to remind parents regularly of the value of what they do for all children, including their own. Second, we need to make each morning an enjoyable experience for them. And, third, you need to make it work for families in today's context.



Read

Making It Meaningful

Our time in God's house with children is limited. There are a vast array of things we can do, but a much more limited scope of things we should be doing. Your volunteers will derive lasting motivation from knowing they are meeting a need in a child's life that wouldn't be met without them. Think about it: it's much easier to quit if you know that "someone else" will lead an activity or provide crowd control than it is to realize that a child is counting on you to be there to listen to them and pray for them.

So what does that look like in real life? That depends on you, but here

are some thoughts:

- Make sure that every activity, song, prayer, game, story and Scripture either connects directly with your primary objective (reaching and discipling children) or serves an important role in reaching that objective.
- Tell all your volunteers how what they are doing connects to the spiritual development of children (hint: if you can't connect it, then the role might need adjustment).
- Work to include a direct connection to children in every role so that your volunteers know the children they are serving. It is important that they know their names, their families, and even their favourite things to do.
- Provide guided opportunities for leaders to pray with children. For example, if you are having a worship/response time, have your volunteers be the prayer team or set the example by worshipping alongside the children. In other words, no talking at the back of the room!
- Share success stories with your whole team. Relay answers to prayer, including salvation and life transformation stories, regarding your children and their families.
- When meeting with and training your volunteers, have them identify people who made an impact on their spiritual lives as children and tell them that they get to be those people in the lives of these children.

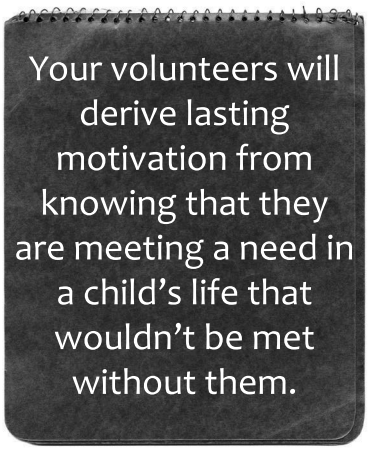
Make It Enjoyable

Of course, not all the roles that need to be filled are so easily connected to spiritual growth. Some are a little less glorious! For example, wiping runny noses in the nursery isn't necessarily everyone's dream job on a Sunday morning. Some people are willing if they know that, by doing so, others are able to experience uninterrupted teaching. But what if people actually started to look forward to it (or at least not dread it)? It's possible—if you recast it so that they *get* to do it with their friends or have an opportunity to connect with newcomers. If there is a child who just won't settle, invite the mom into the nursery rather than sending the young child out to their parent in the service. Simple changes can make a difference in the lives of families. Small adjustments in how you design and promote a position can make a ministry much more effective—and you may even re-energize your volunteers!

With older groups, you can take a cue from some of the new animated

films and target both kids and adults in your large group times. The primary purpose of character skits and storytelling is always to communicate biblical truth and help kids apply it to their lives. Include humour that adults "get" like political references, satire, and some "historical" culture that makes adults chuckle while teaching children. When we do this, we find that adults don't want to miss the skit—which is much better than having them feeling left out because they missed the teaching in the main auditorium.

Finally, make sure that you don't keep doing activities that frustrate your volunteers. Each of us doesn't like leading certain activities. Provide options so that the teacher who hates games doesn't have to lead one all the time. Shuffle your position assignments so that the volunteer hates sports isn't the one responsible for organizing them.



Make It Workable

Make it work for families to be involved. It may sound like a great idea to ask all your teachers to arrive really early for setup and prayer, but consider what is realistic for those who actually have families (especially if both parents are involved in the church). What are their kids supposed to do? Is it really helping the family grow together if you are asking them to "split up" at church?

Before asking your volunteers to do anything, consider the impact on their family. A supper meeting for leaders might be a great idea and a blessing for some adults, but what about those who have to rush home from work, make supper for the rest of their family, arrange a babysitter, and then attend? They might not be as appreciative of the complimentary chili on a bun as you had hoped!

Be strategic when planning meeting days and times. Shorter meetings that are late enough to follow supper and homework crunch time are more effective than earlier meetings. For some teams, finding a meeting time on Sunday morning may be best for your volunteers. If this is the case, make it happen even though it might mean more work for you.

When planning a work bee, have pizza so that parents don't need to worry about supper, and invite them to bring their kids along so they don't need a babysitter.

Another great way of making it work for families is to recruit both parents to teach as a team and allow them to use their own children as helpers in their classes.

Ministry runs on parents, by necessity and by design. As we've become increasingly sensitive to the realities that the impact of our expectations have on families and made adjustments to our programs to make them a meaningful and enjoyable experience, we've found that our recruitment challenges have diminished (*diminished*, not disappeared!).



Reflect on the overall experience of parents who serve in your children's ministry.

Which expectations on parents are most difficult to meet (e.g., arriving early, being at midweek meetings, being apart from other family members, etc.)? Think of ways you can address these roadblocks to increase family connection time.

Next, as you think about the history of your church, identify some things that included everyone? Consider the people who make up your church and pinpoint ways in which people were positively impacted by those experiences. Look over what your church currently does and see if there is anything that meets the same need. If not, identify the need and address it.



We need to resist the urge to wipe the slate clean and start all over. Wholesale change of that sort is traumatic to a congregation and generally does much more harm than good. A wise leader knows the journey is important. Once they determine where they need to lead the people, they plot a course to get there, taking people only as far as they can reasonably go each day so that they will not get too tired and turn

back. Along the way, remind them of their destination and how far they have already come.

Start charting a course by identifying some changes you can implement now to increase: (a) parental involvement in your children's ministry; or (b) the involvement of children in the life of the church. Recognize it as a journey and plan your first steps—steps that people won't even realize they are taking!

notes

Module 11

Session 4

SESSION 4

Ministry to Children in Family Crisis (Separation or Divorce)

by Graham Greenwood

Conflict between parents is generally messy and draining on all who are involved. The challenges of being a single parent, the increased financial strains, the uncertainty, the pain of loss, and the energy expended in fighting are all-consuming for the adults in the family. Children are sensitive to their parents' needs. They recognize when their parents do not have time or energy for them, and they do not want to burden their parents with any further problems; namely, their own pain, their own questions, and their own uncertainty.

It is not uncommon for children of separation/divorce to feel guilt for their parents' relational troubles. They often believe that they were the cause of arguments, and that their parents would not be at the point of divorce had their behaviour been better. Consequently, children often suffer silently through the process. They lose their voice in the family and are uncertain about who they are going to live with, where they are going to live, and if they will have enough money.

Parents also ask their children questions that further confuse and hurt them. They may ask a child whom they would rather live with, forcing the child to "pick favourites." The child may feel there is no way to answer the question without hurting one of their parents.

Parents may also rely on their child to take the place of their former spouse, debriefing at the end of the day or seeking emotional support and affirmation from them. Expecting the child to bear their burdens or meet their emotional needs can further stress a child.

Some excellent books have been written about these challenges.

The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce by Judith S. Wallerstein, Julia M. Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee,[1] and *Between Two Worlds by* Elizabeth Marquard[2] explore these challenges in great detail and are excellent reading for anyone who works with children of divorce, as well as for adult children of divorce.

Some core principles must guide our interaction with children of divorce.



Read

Do not take sides in the parents' conflicts.

The child already feels stuck in the middle of the fight, being pulled in both directions. The child has a deep emotional attachment to both parents. Our role is to listen, to comfort, and to care. We should acknowledge pain, helping the child to identify how they are feeling and why. The child may even express preference for one parent or the other, or tell the story from only one perspective. But remember: the child's version of the events may be heavily influenced by the parent they were with at the time.

Keep in mind that in a marriage breakdown there is generally more than enough blame to go around. Quite often there is no single victim or no individual perpetrator, but two adults whose relationship has disintegrated. Individual incidents are part of a larger narrative, and it is best to let others support the parents.

Don't give the child hope that parents will reconcile.

We all love to see marriages healed and restored. Privately, we can and should pray for this. But the reality is that most marriages which reach the separation or divorce stage do not heal. Even if parents do make the decision to reconcile, the damage is likely too deep to heal quickly and the process of reconciliation will take a great deal of time. Things will not go back to how they were; they will evolve into a new normal that will include scars and memories.

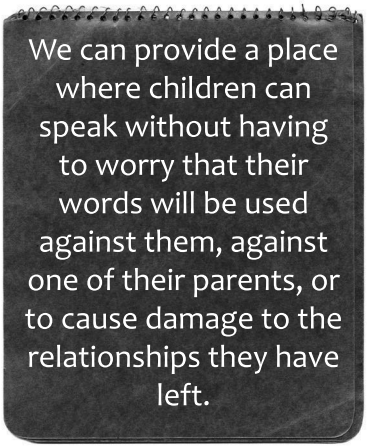
The child's desire for reconciliation is not really optimism about the future, but a denial of their loss. Denial is the first stage in mourning a loss (the child is mourning the loss of their parents' marriage and, by extension, their family as it was).

The child who believes their parents will get back together does so

because it's the easiest way to make the pain go away. Clinging to this hope allows them to put off accepting that their parents are having more than a "normal" marital disagreement, and that big changes lie ahead in the future. The best hope we can offer children of divorce is that Christ will be there to care for them in their suffering.

Provide a safe place for the child.

Children of divorce/separation have few, if any, places where they can be heard and not judged. They may feel they are betraying the family trust if they speak with outsiders about what is going on inside the family. They may feel that no one understands what they are going through. Alternatively, they may not even be able to identify what they are feeling—just that things are not right and they are hurting.



As the church, we can provide a place where children can speak without having to worry that their words will be used against them, against one of their parents, or to cause damage to the relationships they have left. Confidentiality is key. While you cannot (and should not) offer blanket confidentiality to a child, you can offer a place where they can talk privately.

Parents may initially struggle with this. Explain to them that their child needs a place where they can share their thoughts and feelings confidentially, and assure the parents that you are not judging anyone or giving the child false hope. There are several excellent peer support programs designed for children: DivorceCare for Kids/DC4K (www.dc4k.org); Rainbows (www.rainbows.org); and Just Me & the Kids (www.cornerstoneofhope.ca). These three programs are well structured and give kids a safe place.

Legal Issues

The principles above extend to any requests that may come for involvement in the legal wrangling of the parents. As much as possible, maintain your role as one who offers a safe place for the child and respectfully decline requests to comment on the family—either the parents or the child(ren).

Family lawyers are generally careful about putting children in the middle, and judges usually abhor placing a child in a situation where they are forced to choose between parents. While the system is adversarial by nature, the people who work in it know that the real victims are often the children, so they do try to protect them.

However, if you do become aware of a situation where a child is at risk of abuse or is in need of an intervention by the provincial Social Services, you are legally required to report your concern and should do so. If you have any concerns about the implications of reporting, or whether you should report, speak with your pastor, and contact your church's legal counsel and discuss the issue with them.



If you have experienced divorce as a child, you may need to revisit the hurt you've been through. You cannot not help a child process their loss and experience healing if you haven't come to grips with your own loss. Think about your history: your relationship with your parents, siblings and peers. Identify the things that caused you pain and determine the baggage or scars you still carry with you. Ensure that you have fully processed these events yourself.

Next, reflect on why you want to minister to children in crisis. Make certain that your motivation is clear—to help the individual child find wholeness in Christ—rather than clouded by a need to right past wrongs in your own life or make up for previous failures.

If you are unsure of your motivations, take time in prayer and ask God to heal you by the power of His Holy Spirit. If needed, seek the help of a trusted Christian to walk you through this time in your life.

Reflect on Luke 4:18–19 (CEB): *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Respond

Review your church's attendance roster. Take a look at the names of the children and identify the ones who have experienced divorce, separation or death of a parent. Remember to identify blended families in this exercise too. While they have the advantage of two parents at the helm, the issues are as deep—and sometimes deeper—for these children.

Look at your church's ministries and identify places where a child whose parents are divorcing can receive support. How could you strengthen or improve this support, and/or offer it to families outside your church?

Pray and intercede for families going through crisis. Pray Luke 4:18–19 over their lives for healing and restoration. If you do not have a divorce care program (or something similar) for children and families, explore some of the programs listed in this session. Go online and learn more about them, or speak with your pastor or district leadership about Christian program options. Visit another church where one of these programs is in operation.

Endnotes

1. Wallerstein, Judith S., Julia M. Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: The 25 Year Landmark Study* (Hyperion, 2000).
2. Elizabeth Marquard. *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of the Children of Divorce* (Three Rivers, 2005).

notes

Module 12

Advancing Children's Ministry



Module 12

Session 1

SESSION 1

Evaluating Your Ministry Effectiveness

by Graham Greenwood

There are many things we *can* do, and with thought and effort we can do some of them *well.* Effectiveness in leadership is being able to do the *right things* well. There are a myriad of things we could do to impact the kingdom. We can spend time in personal prayer, study and intercession. We can plan lessons, build props and prepare crafts. We can visit children. We can meet with parents. We can develop resources, newsletters and websites. We can recruit and coach volunteers. We can do all sorts of things that will positively impact our ministries. We just can't do them all on our own.



Read

Decide What You Are Going to Do

Before we jump to evaluating *how* we are doing, we need to determine *what* we need to be doing. Everyone we encounter has expectations of us personally and of the children's ministries in our church. The first step in self-evaluation is to carefully determine what we should be doing and, by extension, what we don't need to be doing.

So what are the things we should be doing? This is a question that should be answered in detail with your ministry team. If you are in a smaller church where you are "the team," be glad—this task may not take as long as it would with an entire committee! It will take a lot of thought, careful consideration and prayer. There is a quick way to find out if you are going in the right direction. The things you should be doing are the ones that you get excited about. What are the tasks that you can't wait to dive into? We are most effective when we focus our energy on the tasks that excite us individually and as a team.

Your passion might be community evangelism or helping children in crisis. It might be in-depth small group discipleship or the training and empowering of kids for ministry. You might even find that you get more excited about teaching others to do hands-on ministry. Whatever your individual calling is, it must help to fulfil the divine mandate—the Great Commission to go and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all of Jesus' teaching.

Define Your Measurement Criteria

Objective measures are things like weekly attendance numbers: the total number of individuals who attend (including occasional attendees), the number of volunteers, the number of kids who complete a task or challenge, and offering income, etc. These are things that are empirically measurable. They require interpretation but are easily surveyed.

Objective measures help keep us grounded in reality. They give us benchmark numbers that we can compare from week to week and from year to year. If we are healthy and effective, we should grow in these tangible ways (church growth is a biblical principle). If not, they are early indicators that there could be some areas which need some attention.

Here are some "standard" objective measures that can help you benchmark your programs:

- Weekly attendance (how many kids attend each week).
- Number of individual attendees (how many different kids attend each month or year).
- Frequency of attendance (how regularly people attend).
- Number of first-time visitors.

While these objective numbers are important, they tell only a portion of our story. Our commission is to make disciples, not just gather a crowd. To evaluate your effectiveness in discipleship, you will need to look at some **subjective measures**. These numbers are not immediately discernible but rely on our understanding and perception. Ask:

- Are children being saved?
- Can the children explain the gospel to someone?
- Are children building relationships within the church?
- Does someone at the church know each child?
- Are children growing in their understanding of the Bible?
- Are they able to discuss key stories, principles and concepts?
- Do children and families have a concern and passion for non-Christians?

Interpret Your Results

If you took the time to decide what you should be doing, then you need to use your objective and subjective observations to determine if you are being effective. If not, question whether the approach you decided on is suited to accomplish your goals. For example, if your burning passion is for evangelism of the local community, do your first-time numbers show that you are being effective? You may have many first-time visitors, but are they the ones you were expecting?

Processing the results of an evaluation can be difficult. Sometimes they tell us things that we don't want to hear. Using the example of evangelism, we may be encouraged by objective increases in attendance. However, if we find that our growth is actually transfer growth, we are still not accomplishing what we set out to do. It might mean that we need to make adjustments in our programs, or it could mean that God is nudging us to re-examine our strengths.

While it can be difficult, evaluating your objectives and your results is important for your formation as a children's leader. It is critical to ongoing effectiveness and can be a humbling reminder that some things are out of our hands.

Proceed with Caution

When we discover gaps between our desired outcomes or goals and our present reality, we need to put together a plan to address them. Change needs to be introduced and managed well to be successful. A few key principles can help you in implementing changes to your programming in order to become more effective.

The gain has to be greater than the pain.

Change is not easy on people or on an organization. In the process, you will lose momentum and frustrate people—that's the nature of change. Before you implement changes, be absolutely sure that it's the right thing to do. You should also be sure that change will make things better, and that the subjective benefits will compensate for the cost of making changes.

People will resist change.

Some will prefer the "old" way of doing things. They will use old forms, call ministries by their old names, continue using old curricula, and even invite people to non-existent programs. Think of it in terms of inertia: you

are changing the direction and speed of a moving object. Consequently, larger and faster changes will take greater amounts of energy. Once you are on course, things will settle down. The first phase of change is the hardest.

Some changes need to be accomplished together.

When you make structural changes to your program, you might also consider making any necessary changes in leadership or décor. People need to feel that there is an end in sight, and that they will find stability and consistency again.

Some change needs to be spread out.

If a change is overwhelming, you may need to prime people with smaller adjustments so they know that change, followed by a return to consistency, is possible. You can introduce larger scale changes once people see the benefits of less significant changes.

Pilot projects can be a great way to introduce controversial change.

Try something new for six months and then decide what to do. This is a great way to introduce new curricula, classes or teaching strategies. The trial period needs to be long enough to give the change an opportunity to be effectively tested or to become the new normal.

Evaluate the Little Things

So far, we've discussed the "big picture" measures that we need to have in place to give us a benchmark for success in our ministry programs. However, most improvements in our ministry effectiveness don't come from the "big" decisions about which programs to run or which model of ministry to use.

Most parents and kids don't care which curriculum publisher you choose. They won't take any comfort in how effective a strategy has been at other churches if they are frustrated by your registration procedure or confused by your handouts. Visitors won't stay for your compelling services if they can't find them or if they don't feel that their kids are safe in your care. These are areas where the small things start to make a difference. An evaluation of your program through the eyes of parents and visitors (who often have dissimilar experiences) can yield small changes that make a big difference. Invest time "troubleshooting" your ministry programs regularly and make ongoing improvement a part of your culture.

Don't Lose Perspective

We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, share His teachings, model His love, and point people toward Him. This work is spiritual and our goals are eternal. The final value of what we do may never be known. The process of spiritual formation is a lifelong work of the Holy Spirit. None of us have reached the end of our journey. Some people's early zeal causes them to burn out quickly. Others take years to grow strong, deep roots before the fruit of their work becomes evident.

We can always strive to do better. But we also need to remember that we are God's children. We are not just ministers; we also need to be ministered to. We are doing His work, we are learning along the way—or at least should be!—and we need to remember to enjoy the journey.



Reflect

List the expectations that are placed on you and on your ministry. Identify the source of each expectation. Have you placed it on yourself or has it been placed on you by the church leadership (senior pastor, board), by parents, or by your sense of God's calling on your life?

Review your list of expectations prayerfully and begin reshaping them so that you can set an achievable target set yourself. If necessary, review them with your pastor or with others to whom you are accountable so that there is clear understanding of what you should be doing.



Respond

Develop some objective and subjective measures that you can use to track your ministry effectiveness. If possible, use some historic records (such as Sunday school rolls or annual reports) to highlight where your congregation has come from.

Now share your findings with the church. Start with your team and then meet with your pastor.

Module 12

Session 2

SESSION 2

Preparing and Presenting Your Budget

by Jason Thunberg

It's time for an adventure! You're about to embark on a financial journey. You will face struggles, frustrations, challenges, obstacles and, if all goes well, victory! If you stay alert, you will find that you can travel with ease over the difficulties ahead. But first, you must identify your biggest enemy. Unfortunately, it's you.

When money issues arise in my life, I find that I am my own biggest enemy. I am overwhelmed with jealousy, greed, impatience, laziness or stubbornness. First Timothy 6:10 reminds us that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." When I react this way, it is usually because I have been busy looking jealously at other ministries and programs instead of tending to my own. It is so easy to wish that we had more resources. However, there will always be something that someone else has that you don't.

Finances are a great responsibility. If you are not the children's pastor or ministry director, it is still important that you understand a church's budgeting process. This will help you to make wise decisions in everything for which you are responsible. It will also enable you to better understand the financial decisions that need to be made at more senior levels.

Finances can cause a great deal of grief when improperly managed. This is not God's plan for us. With spiritual and emotional maturity we can manage our finances in a way that frees us to minister effectively. Pray that you will have the heart of God as you prepare your budget.

Read

Planning Your Spending

To be honest, spending money is one of my favourite things to do. However, when most of us consider preparing our budgets, we think about our financial restrictions or limitations. Instead, think about how you can responsibly spend the money that has been budgeted to you and find ways to increase your ability to spend. I certainly hope that last part got your attention! You also need to remember that your senior pastor and church board are on your side. They want to see you succeed, have fun and further your scope of ministry. So stop moping, turn your frown upside down, and get started!

Below is a chart showing the differences between the two primary methods of financial planning: departmental planning and administrative planning. Compare these charts to your church's organizational structure and choose the one that best suits your needs.

Departmental Planning	Administrative Planning
General	**Craft Supplies**
Craft Supplies Classroom Supplies Prizes Snacks Props	Nursery Preschool Grade School Midweek Programming General
General Total	Craft Supply Total
Nursery	**Curriculum**
Curriculum Furniture Snacks Supplies/Prizes Toys/Equipment	Nursery Preschool Grade School Midweek Programming
Nursery Total	Curriculum Total

Departmental Planning	Administrative Planning
Preschool	**Toys/Equipment**
Awards Curriculum Furniture Snacks Supplies/Prizes Toys/Equipment	General Nursery Preschool Grade School Midweek Programming
Preschool Total	Toys/Equipment Total

With one of these formats in mind, write down everything that your children's ministry needs. Be sure to include things like GST/HST (because you can claim a charitable refund for this), specialty paper, children's Bibles, charitable giving (e.g., *Missions and Kids* teaching resource), and future planning. Be very thorough in this stage of planning. If you forget to include something in your budget, you won't be able to incorporate it until you write next year's budget. Ask for help from members of your team and from other pastors. They may see something that you miss.

Your budget is the financial map for the year ahead. However, keep in mind that your route may change and that unplanned income or expenses may arise. Keep some of your descriptions general enough to give you flexibility to allot funds as needed.

Planning Your Income

It sometimes feels that no matter what we plan, limited income takes all the fun out of financial planning. You may be thinking, *I'm from a small church* or *The board doesn't like me that much!* Budget preparation is your opportunity to stretch your faith and go forward.

There are two primary sources of income that you should include in your budget: internal funding (e.g., tithes, offerings, and the support of your congregation) and external funding.

First, when budgeting for **internal** sources of income, you will need the following information:

Is there an allotment for children's ministries in your church's budget? You will need to know how much has been budgeted for children's

ministry and how often it is released (generally, monthly or quarterly). If regular funds are available, you will be able to plan for large financial commitments with greater ease.

Are you able to go directly to the congregation with special financial requests? These are best done on a children's ministries emphasis Sunday, at a Christmas concert, or on the Sunday before VBS or summer camp. Ask your senior pastor for a date when you will have an opportunity to present your vision and needs to the congregation.

Can you make regular appeals for items like Bibles, program registrations, or the ongoing costs of a quality Christian education program? Calculate the weekly cost for an individual child to participate in your regular programming, and use this number to budget your needed income.

Are you able to hold in-house fundraisers such as charity dinners, garage sales, etc.? These can be very difficult to plan, but there are benefits to church fundraisers beyond the financial support they raise. How often does your children's ministries program interact with other individuals in the church? You would be surprised how many people are looking for ways to support the overall heart and vision of their church. Fundraisers give people an opportunity to interact with one another for a worthwhile cause, and also to serve children without ever presenting an object lesson or doing crafts.

Never be afraid to let your congregation know your specific needs. Someone may have a high chair they are not using anymore or sports equipment that their kids have grown out of. Someone may even purchase needed items specifically for your ministry. Never underestimate people's generosity. However, when individuals donate personal items, you need to make it clear that you reserve the right to dispose of things that are unsafe or inappropriate for children. Create a list of specific items that you need and find ways to present it to the church.

Second, before budgeting for **external** sources of income, you will need to do the following:

Contact your local and provincial governments about local service grants that are offered. You may need to assume responsibility for cleaning a

local park or a section of highway.

Contact local service clubs to see if they are willing to help support a local fundraising project.

Go to businesses with a prepared letter. You should do this only to request help with specific projects. Ask if they are willing to donate directly to the project in question. Be sure to offer them a tax receipt. This is something that takes time, so don't wait until six weeks before your event. You might need to begin six to eight *months* in advance. Many businesses include charitable donations in their budgets. You may need to approach them in September, as this is the most common season for commercial budgeting.

Some larger businesses or chains may not donate money directly but will give you a discount on product purchased. When approaching businesses outside of your church, always be sure to look professional. Be able to provide proper documentation indicating who you are, where you are from, and what you are doing. Make sure that you leave church specific contact information so that they can get in touch with you. Donations from businesses can take time; you are not the only one out there looking for assistance. Businesses want to know they are making the best investment possible in their community.

There are some businesses that won't give monetary donations or discounts but are willing to give product. Imagine having a church barbecue that cost nothing because the buns, burgers—and even the grill—were all donated to the church for free!

Finally, if you are preparing a barbecue or running car wash, book sale or other event, partner up with local businesses that may be able to help you reduce costs. National chains that are locally owned and operated are often open to assisting local non-profit and charitable organizations with their events. When doing these types of events, be sure to advertise! Radio and television stations, as well as newspapers, may provide public service announcements to promote your event for free.

The reality is that your sources of income are only as limited as your imagination! Nothing is free. Even cash donations will require some effort on your part.

In Luke 21, Jesus reminds us that it's not the size of the gift that matters. Many may not have the finances to give, but time and skills can benefit your ministry just as much as money.

After All the Planning

Generally, most of us have to wait for approval from the church board or financial committee before we are able to spend budgeted funds. If your budget is rejected, find out why. Ask for input on how to manage your budget if you are given less than you ask for, or permission to look for more funds beyond the proposed budget. The outline that you have just completed isn't a prison cell, but a map for a journey.

If your budget is approved, do not abandon it or spend beyond the bounds of your budget. You need to stick to your word. As Matthew 5:37 says, "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' " If situations arise that demand a substantial deviation from your plan, go to your senior pastor. If any questions come up, your pastor will be there to support you. Many leaders find budgets a necessary evil; for others, they come easily. No matter how you look at your financial responsibility, it will take time, determination and spiritual maturity. Regardless of your experience, you need a sound budget to keep you on track and accountable for your ministry spending. So, as you get ready to sit down and set out your next budget, start with prayer. Take your time and be open to advice. This is an area of your ministry where you can have a powerful spiritual impact!



"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."
—Les Brown

When making financial plans, I have met people who set small goals. I don't know if they do this because of a lack of faith, because they don't like planning out budgets, or because they are just small thinkers. But God is not a small thinker, and you should not be either.

Take some time and write out your dreams for your area of ministry. Would you like to offer midweek outreach programs, a breakfast ministry in a local school, a drop-in sports program on Fridays in the summer, a bus ministry, a divorce program for children, a before- and after-school program, or another program, that could meet a need in your

community? Be sure to write out everything—because nothing is too hard for God.

Respond

What does your children's ministries funding look like?

- How much is it?
- How often do you or your children's ministries director receive it?

Plan a Sunday service dedicated to supporting children's ministries.

- Date of event
- Specific purpose of the event

Calculate the weekly cost for an individual child to participate in your regular programming.

Create a list of fundraisers that would not only raise funds but also build community in your local church.

Create a list of items you need that could be either donated or sponsored by individuals in your church.

Contact the different levels of government to see if there are any subsidies or programs that your church could participate in to raise funds.

Contact local service clubs to see if there are any projects that your church could join to raise funds.

Create a list of businesses that you will approach for specific donations to lower your overhead costs.

Create a letter with a specific project in mind that you will send to local businesses.

Module 12

Session 3

SESSION 3

Managing Your Budget for Future Development

by Jason Thunberg

So you've done it! Your budget was approved six months ago and now you are enjoying the fruit of your labour. It is almost time to start thinking about submitting a budget for next year. Are you tempted to photocopy last year's budget and just change the dates?

Don't do it! In fact, you need to go over the past financial year in the summer and early fall to begin planning for the future year. You need to take stock of your current financial situation. How many gift Bibles do you still have on your shelf? How many pairs of scissors need to be replaced? Have you underestimated the changes in the cost of curriculum?

You will probably find yourself in the unenviable position of trying to prepare for a budgetary year before the calendar year is actually complete. You will have to estimate some numbers since the financial year isn't finished and the expenses and income for the year aren't final. Preparing last year's budget was like charting a map; this year you'll need to use a time machine.



Read

Travelling Through Time

Let's set up your time machine with the ability to travel to the past and future with three destinations in mind. You will need to revisit this year's proposed budget and travel forward to see this year's actual (estimated) budget and next year's proposed budget. Create a chart with these three columns, and be sure to include the actual years in the column titles.

Proposed This Year (20##): This column shows the financial plan you made last year and the funding that was agreed upon. These numbers

cannot change. They should be copied directly from the budget that was approved before you began your current financial year.

Estimated This Year (20##): This column shows how your current financial year's budget will compare with your actual income and spending for the year. Here you have an opportunity to show your financial prowess and also the reality of financial costs that were unexpected and beyond your control. You can expect these numbers to differ slightly from your proposed budget and from the actual year-end numbers—they are, in part, predictions.

Proposed Next Year (20##+1): This is where you set your financial requests for next year, leaving room for notes and explanations where your proposed budget differs from your current budget. These numbers are subject to the approval of your church's board and may change before they are approved.

Let's take a look at an example:

Sample Budget			
	Proposed This Year's Budget	Estimated This Year's Budget	Proposed Next Year's Budget
Receipts			
Donations	$2,300	$2,000	$2,000
Fundraising	$3,125	$3,300	$3,900
Club Fees	$500	$700	$800
Offering	$1,500	$1,500	$1,500
GST/HST Rebate	$50	$50	$50
Subvention	$4,000	$4,000	$4,000
Carry-over	n/a	n/a	$315
Total	$11,475	$11,550	$12,565
Expenses			
Administration			
Bibles	$50	$50	$75
Paper	$50	$50	$50
Postage	$50	$45	$50
Admin. Total	$150	$145	$175

Sample Budget			
	Proposed This Year's Budget	Estimated This Year's Budget	Proposed Next Year's Budget
General			
Craft Supplies	$200	$225	$250
Classroom Supplies	$100	$75	$75
Prizes	$50	$55	$75
Snacks	$50	$75	$75
Props	$50	$20	$20
General Total	$450	$450	$495
Nursery			
Curriculum	$50	$0	$0
Furniture	$250	$300	$200
Snacks	$100	$150	$250
Supplies	$200	$75	$100
Toys	$100	$175	$200
Nursery Total	$700	$700	$750

As you can see, there were a few changes from this year's proposed budget. Here is an explanation of two significant changes.

Receipts: Fundraising
Fundraising efforts will have to be increased because of the increased cost of shipping and the overall increase of purchasing.

Expenses: Nursery Furniture
Money previously budgeted for nursery furniture is no longer needed. New toys and high chairs were purchased using funds from last year's budget and will not need to be replaced in the coming year. Also, extra money was spent on furniture for a new television to replace the old one.

Whenever there are changes from one column to the next, be sure to include a small note to describe the change. These simple explanations will help immensely as you present your needs, and they will also show that you have paid careful attention to your budget and the management of your ministry.

The Past: Last Year's Proposed Budget

This sample chart highlights the fluidity of the budgetary process. When you manage other people's money, hard questions are often asked and the answers need to available. Some may think that they have been irresponsible and a failure if they deviate from their original budget. You are responsible to manage your budget well, but there may be details that are out of your control; you will have to manage them responsibly as they come up.

Last year's proposed budget was built on informed prediction but will not always reflect actual circumstances. As you are trying to manage your current budget, remember to learn from your previous budgets. Build upon them and leave room for the unseen so that the present and future will be even more successful than the past.

The Present: This Year's Actual Budget

I'm sure you have felt at one time or another that there simply isn't enough time to do everything that is required of you. I have also felt this way regarding finances. We never seem to have enough income to satisfy the demands placed on us. Every penny that comes in has already been spent. We need to be very careful to avoid the pitfalls that stop us from looking at God and His plan. In my mother-in-law's kitchen she has a plate that reads, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans." Each time I visit her home, that plate reminds me to trust God.

As you read this section, your children's ministries will be in one of two financial positions: the red or the black.

Being in the Red

Nobody likes to be in the red, but it's easy to get there and can be difficult to get out. You end up in the red one of three ways:

1. *Poor planning.* You didn't take time to plan out your year with enough detail and thought.
2. *Poor spending.* It doesn't matter if you have a perfect plan—if you don't follow it.
3. *Emergencies.* You were forced to spend money that you didn't budget for or your income is significantly lower than expected due to situations beyond your control.

Two of these three circumstances are caused by your own actions. The

other is beyond your control. You must always be aware of your current financial situation and how you got there. If your actions have caused financial imbalances, step up to the plate, be responsible, start working on a plan to balance your books. If there are imbalances created by circumstances beyond your control, it's important to remember Luke 18:27 (CEB): "*What is impossible for humans is possible for God.*" Step up, include your finances in your prayers, re-evaluate your plans, and prayerfully plan to rebalance your budget.

Being in the Black

This is where you want to be. However, being in the black means that you have a responsibility to spend wisely and to be generous in times of need. You might even find yourself spending money that is outside of your budget. I have often found that, if I am in the black, I am able to purchase something that will positively impact another department within the church. I have seen this kind of generosity returned through donations, gifts or miraculous savings on other purchases.

You can end up in the black one of three ways:

1. *Great planning*. You've taken the time to sit down and work out a realistic plan that will meet your needs and fit your income.
2. *Great spending.* You have been diligent and responsible with how you spend your budget and are reaping benefits because of it.
3. *Blessings.* For reasons beyond your control, your costs are down or your income is up and you have more money than you budgeted for.

Once again, two of these three circumstances are caused by your own actions and choices, and the other is beyond your control. Now, you might start to think that if you try hard enough, emergencies should be the only cause of financial shortfalls. This is only partially true. Your financial situation is a result of the gifts and abilities with which God has blessed you, and also of the opportunities and situations you face.

Read the parable of the talents from Matthew 25:14–30. Two of the servants were able to increase the amount of money that was given to them, but the last servant returned with the exact amount for which he had been given responsibility. They all were in the black! What we don't know about each of these servants is their qualifications, their

relationship with their master, or whether there were other servants who could have been chosen instead of them.

We do know that there were three servants, and that each was entrusted with money while their master was gone. Each one returned with no losses, but only two had been able to find ways to increase their responsibility. I wonder what would have happened if the servant with five talents had not had quite the return on his investment as the parable tells us.

We can only guess what might have happened, or even what the other details of the business agreements were before their master went on his trip. What we do know is that one was fired and two were kept in his employ.

How should we spend today?

You may find yourself torn between the responsibility to spend wisely one moment and to give generously the next. You need to be aware of your financial abilities each and every moment. Endeavour to be God's representative as you shop at the grocery store or the toy store when planning a program or sponsoring children for your local summer camp.

The Future: Next Year's Proposed Budget

This is where there are the most questions and the least number of answers. There are so many things you simply cannot predict. For example, do you have any way of knowing that next year the price of fuel is going to increase dramatically? Or can you predict the failure of a major distributor that will necessitate your ordering product from outside the country?

Managing your budget for the future means that you need to understand your past budgets, know your current finances, and be constantly aware of factors that may impact your future planning. It is important to set up a "future planning" portion of your budget for the purchase of big-ticket items or events. If you run a VBS, summer camp or other ministry that has a registration fee for participation, ensure that your fees reflect your expenses. Create a fund for lean years, ministry expansion, and even child sponsorships. Don't always depend on donations to be there to keep you afloat.

Saving for that next project or trying to find ways to make your future run

more economically is never easy. But when you make a habit of this, you will find it increasingly easy to manage future budgets.

Communicating regularly with people such as teachers, social workers and other pastors in your local area can result in significant savings. They are also looking for the best deal on crayons, books and other resources. Someone may have a resource that they would be willing to share.

Next Steps

I'm sure that actual time travel would be more interesting than managing your budget, but budgeting doesn't need to be a major trial. If this is something that comes easy to you, be excited. Many don't enjoy administration at all. If it is a challenge, make it a matter of prayer and ask God for help, either directly from Him or through others.

J.R.R. Tolkien said, "Not all those who wander are lost." So don't worry if you feel like you are wandering. It doesn't mean you are lost, especially if you are holding the hand of God.



Where are you in the financial books for your children's ministry? If you don't know and you are the leader of that area of ministry, find out. It is unlikely that you will always remember the amount down to the penny, but you should have easy access to that information.

If you are in the red, find out why. Start planning now how you can return to the black. Inform your senior pastor of the situation to keep yourself accountable and on track.

If you are in the black, find out why. You need to know if it is by accident or by responsible planning and spending. Consider what you might do with the extra cash. You might be able to carry some over to next year or set it aside in a future planning fund. If you think you might be making a large and unplanned purchase, inform your senior pastor of your intentions. This can prevent others from thinking that you are being financially irresponsible.

If you are not the ministry leader, there are still ways you can influence

the budget and help ensure that it stays in the black. Consider some ways you can raise awareness in your church and community. Consider which fundraisers you personally can bring leadership to. Remember that the body of Christ is made up of many parts (1 Corinthians 12). Each part must function in its own strength so that the entire body is strong.

Respond

Create a plan for next year. Set aside time to review your financial position monthly. Do not procrastinate about this. Track the different times of the year when your income swells or shrinks.

Reflect on the possibility of using the funding available to you to bless others. Adopt a child through ERDO's ChildCARE Plus program and set aside the funds monthly. Take a look at various child related projects promoted by the PAOC's *Missions and Kids* teaching resource and get involved. It is important that children help others in need.

Lastly, create a poster with Matthew 6:33 on it. Frame it with your dreams and goals and pray daily for God's help in your finances. He will amaze and surprise you as you work diligently and put your trust in Him.

notes

notes

Module 12

Session 4

SESSION 4

From Children's Ministries to Children in Ministry

by Jo-Anne Hollander

Ministry involving children is my passion, and I'm sure it is yours as well since you have now progressed to the last of the 48 lessons in this course. Congratulations! Children are our future and have so much potential. But children are not just the church of the future. They are divinely appointed by God to participate in the church now, helping to advance the kingdom. We often talk about ministry being "to" children. However, for children's ministry to be ultimately successful, we need to recognize the value that children themselves bring to the church, and their vital role in the church.

In this session we will work on taking children's ministries to that next step and introduce children in ministry to children's ministries. This can be a sensitive subject for some. Children are a treasured gift and a particularly vulnerable part of the church community. They need to be protected and taught, but they cannot be taught how to live effective lives for Christ as adults without allowing them to participate in ministry while they are still young. In this session I will highlight a number of Scriptures that speak about children and their place and role in the church. As you read these Scriptures, remember how much God values your children and begin to imagine ways that you can take your children's ministry to the next level by allowing them to participate as children in the kingdom of God, serving Him effectively as they work to reach those who are lost and in need of a relationship with Christ.



Read

Psalm 8:1-2 (NLT)

> *O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!*
> *Your glory is higher than the heavens.*

You have taught children and infants
to tell of your strength,
silencing your enemies
and all who oppose you.

In many public contexts, including church, children are expected to be seen but not heard. However, the Bible tells us that God has ordained infants to tell of His strength and silence the enemy. Jesus Himself refers to this Psalm after clearing the temple:

> *People who were blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and legal experts saw the amazing things he was doing and the children shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were angry. They said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?"*
>
> *"Yes," he answered. "Haven't you ever read, From the mouths of babies and infants you've arranged praise for yourself?" Then he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there (*Matthew 21:14–17, CEB).

We cannot hear the children if they are not among us sharing our experiences, reaching out with us to those in need, and responding to things from a perspective we may have forgotten.

This same concept is revisited in the Psalms. We often quote the opening of this Psalm in child dedication services, reminding parents that children are a blessing and reward, but consider verses four and five and their application to the church:

> *The children born when one is young are like arrows in the hand of a warrior. The person who fills a quiver full with them is truly happy! They won't be ashamed when arguing with their enemies in the gate* (Psalm 127:4–5, CEB).

The psalmist's imagery indicates that children have a significant part to play in the church, and that God wants to use children to advance His kingdom. Our legacy as children's ministers, leaders and workers lies largely in the ministry and service of those children with whom we have spent time and who have been raised under our ministry. We must begin

to equip them to serve while they are still young.

Jesus' disciples, not yet grasping the full purpose of Jesus' ministry and interested only in securing places of prominence in the coming kingdom, asked Him a question about greatness in the kingdom that they did not understand.

> *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"*
>
> *Then he called a little child over to sit among the disciples, and said, "I assure you that if you don't turn your lives around and become like this little child, you will definitely not enter the kingdom of heaven. Those who humble themselves like this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*
>
> *As for whoever causes these little ones who believe in me to trip and fall into sin, it would be better for them to have a huge stone hung around their necks and be drowned in the bottom of the lake. How terrible it is for the world because of the things that cause people to trip and fall into sin! Such things have to happen, but how terrible it is for the person who causes those things to happen! If your hand or your foot causes you to fall into sin, chop it off and throw it away. It's better to enter into life crippled or lame than to be thrown into the eternal fire with two hands or two feet. If your eye causes you to fall into sin, tear it out and throw it away. It's better to enter into life with one eye than to be cast into a burning hell with two eyes.*
>
> *Be careful that you don't look down on one of these little ones. I say to you that their angels in heaven are always looking into the face of my Father who is in heaven ... "* (Matthew 18:1–10, CEB).

Each paragraph in this private exchange between the disciples and Jesus has an important lesson for us as it relates to children and their importance to God and value to the church.

The first paragraph introduces this exchange and the adult pre-occupation with status and position. Mark 10 tells us the disciples were actually arguing over their status and place as disciples. They were still

viewing the kingdom of God as a place to gain personal status.

Jesus' response in the second paragraph shows us that He was aware of the children in their midst. He used the situation to draw attention away from the disciples and their preoccupation with themselves. He affirmed the child as a model of faith and humility, a fitting example for the disciples. Children do not have the authority and status that the disciples wanted, but their dependence on God is exemplary for any of Jesus' followers.

Having used children as an illustration, Jesus explained the fact that children have a special place in the kingdom. Their innocence is invaluable. Those who cause them to sin will face significant consequences.

The final paragraph in this passage presents one of the great affirmations of a child's place in God's heart.

A little later (Matthew 19:13–15), we read an account of a more public scenario. The disciples, having already heard Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18 about the value of children, prevent parents from bringing their children to Jesus. The Gospel of Mark records the same incident but gives us greater insight into Jesus' frustration with His disciples when they prevent the children from approaching Him:

> *People were bringing children to Jesus so that he would bless them. But the disciples scolded them. When Jesus saw this, he grew angry and said to them, "Allow the children to come to me. Don't forbid them, because God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. I assure you that whoever doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child will never enter it." Then he hugged the children and blessed them* (10:13–16, CEB).

Children are close to the heart of God. They are valuable to God, and Jesus Himself used them as examples of what service in His name looks like. Like children, we should not seek our own good. Like children, we ought to approach Jesus openly. Jesus' message about children has two sides to it. First, we should protect them at all costs. We need to train them to serve, but we must make sure they are safe and taught well.

Children are our present and our future. In the present, they are priceless to God. The worst kinds of sins are those that do damage to something

so precious. Children, like the arrows in the Psalmist's quiver, are also our best hope for the future—our defence when the enemy comes seeking to destroy.

For our children to grow into effective servants of God, they need to start ministering, in the way that children do, right now. They cannot wait until tomorrow or we may lose them forever. We can teach them to minister, and they are our best hope. Even more than that, their innocence is a valuable gift they have to give, and their perspectives remind us of the simplicity we often forget.

Children are a great gift from God. We can learn from them and we should teach them to serve with us, giving them every opportunity possible and creating some where there may not be many. Children's ministry is paramount for the health of the kingdom of God but is taken to the next level when it allows for the transition from children's ministries to children in ministry.



In this module we have considered a number of Scriptures from the Psalms and the New Testament on the value and place of children in the church. However, there are a number of significant examples where children are used by God in the history of the nation of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament.

Consider the lives of Isaac, David, Samuel, Josiah and Timothy. Each of these individuals heard from God as young children and had significant contributions to offer, both as children and as adults.

Read the story of Samuel and reflect on his life. Make notes on the following:

- The conditions surrounding Samuel's birth.
- The expectations placed upon Samuel by his mother.
- How Samuel initially responded to God's voice.
- How a prophecy like the one given to Samuel would be received today.
- Would the church today accept a prophecy given to a child?

Respond

In leadership, we can lament that things are not what they should be or we can work toward making them better. The latter is much more effective! It may be tempting to respond to this session with a lament that your present reality does not reflect Scripture. Avoid the temptation to lament! Instead, develop a strategy to help your church improve using your existing influence.

First, identify some ways that your church presently values children (e.g., baby dedication, special moments for kids, children's programs, etc.).

Next, pinpoint ways in which children are currently able to express spiritual gifts and make a contribution to the church (e.g., offerings, service opportunities, etc.).

Now consider the Scriptures in this session, other Scriptures relating to children, and the notes from your study of the life of Samuel. Identify any gaps where children may not be able to give contributions that God has ordained them to make.

Finally, review the ways your church presently expresses value for children and/or allows them opportunity to express their gifts. Present ways to enhance those moments and bring added significance. Be sure to express genuine appreciation to your leadership for placing a continued priority on children. Remember: praise is always more effective than put-downs. Praise will produce better responses and long-lasting results.

notes