



children's church



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Introduction

Now that we're in the Twenty First Century we need to ask; "What is the Church doing to win children to Christ?" "How are children being taught?" And most important, "What kind of transformation is this going to make in the lives of our children?" The speed at which changes in our world are taking place makes it difficult to predict what is going to happen within the next few years. What is really important is whether or not the church will continue to see Children's Ministry as one of its top priorities and as a window of opportunity to reach children and to minister to them while they are more responsive.

But, how do children live like Jesus when everything surrounding them is hostile or when those who say they represent the Master do not reflect Him in their lives? As the moral climate declines, children need the church's influence more than ever. Today's youngsters are growing up in a society of broken families, violence, moral perversion and hidden influences. Without the direct influence of a strong faith community, children may not have a chance to meet, love and serve our Lord. The church must act now! We must make a concerted effort to decide that children are first, we must teach them effectively and win each child to Christ, as soon as the Holy Spirit gives the opportunity. This is why the discipleship of parents and committed Christian leaders must be effective; so that they can develop in children the character and values shaped by Jesus.

Children were created by the Lord to be developed into people with a plan to fulfill. The discipling that the church gives them will determine the difference between the success and failure of the transformation of society through the value and truth of the gospel. We want our children to be firmly established and to be imitators of the model set by Jesus.

Children's Church is the foundation for strong disciples in the church. Children are the church of today and tomorrow's leaders; therefore, the highest priority is that they receive the Lord Jesus as their Savior. Even young children can understand their need for salvation. But, who will tell them how to meet that need? Who will help them to be Christ-like? Are you that person? Children's Church is an extension of the church. We must help our children know God, know themselves, know their value and know their purpose.

God expects humans to do His will on earth. He could have chosen to use His angels or other means, but his method includes men and woman, despite their fragility and reluctance. God can use us because, firstly, he is able to use the most insignificant and incapable of men (Jeremiah 32:17, 27; Luke 1:37) and secondly, because the message that we teach is powerful enough to change lives (Romans 1:16). When someone places the small and the weak in the hands of God, God makes what is insufficient, sufficient. Let us be used by our God and Father in the unique and beautiful task of guiding children to their Creator.

This manual is designed to work within our vast region. We encourage you to adapt it to your situation and needs and we are confident that He who loves the children more than we do, will give you creativity and the necessary resources in your church to find the strategy that will supply your needs in a marvelous way.

We want to give you a general idea of what Children's Church is and how to implement it in a simple but organized way; and emphasize that this is not another Sunday School Class, but a time where children will be prepared to serve and worship God.

It is our desire that our God may bless you miraculously through the use and implementation of this material and that you, as the children's leader, can use it to teach others, just as Paul did with Timothy and in addition can share it with those who need it.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE AND COMMITMENT.

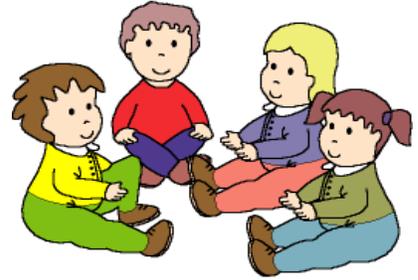
Welcome to the adventure of guiding a new generation towards God's purpose!



What is Children's Church?

The best way to answer that question is by understanding what Children's Church is not. It's not a duplication of Sunday school. Neither is it day care for children. It is not an extended Sunday School session planned for the little ones.

Children's Church is A WORSHIP SERVICE, PLANNED IN A WAY THAT WILL MAKE WORSHIP RELEVANT FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH.



For Children's Church to be effective, it should be prepared and designed at the level of the children's understanding. It should encourage the children to take an active part in the worship services of Children's Church and not simply be "passive listeners".

A great variety of activities and methods can be used to keep the children interested and to apply Biblical truths to their lives and the way they act; but it will only be valid when it is born out of an experience during significant worship; i.e. not only should you appeal to the child's feelings, but you should lead him to a clear experience of worship and devotion to God.

Arguments For and Against

"Families should be together during church services."

"Children must be quiet and listen to the whole sermon that the Pastor is preaching."

"The distractions or noise from children should be acceptable during a service."

"Parents must care for their children outside the church."

These arguments are unrealistic, because children are just unable to pay attention throughout an entire church service. Wouldn't it be better for these children to learn that church is a place to worship God? What about the children whose parents don't go to church?

Because of the behavior of children, worship services are interrupted by distractions by children and by adults needing to get up to attend to or take care of their kids, and they don't always know how to treat them. Many kids don't even sit with their family, they go seat with their best friends; others remain close to their parents but are drawing, reading, playing or writing. It's not that the kids are misbehaving; it is that they are not accustomed to or are not taught how to properly behave in a church service. Let's not blame the kids for being bored in church since much of what is said or done they do not understand because it is not presented at their level of understanding. Let's not blame the pastor either, as he may have the attention of the child just for a brief moment, but after a few minutes, the child will shift in his seat, move around, crawl under the chairs/benches, pinch his brother or pull a girl's hair. There are some adults that enjoy watching the well behaved child, but they need to understand that sometimes these kids are calm only because they are threatened by their parents to behave. These are all very good reasons for having a Children's Church. In Children's Church kids will learn how to behave and how to worship the Lord.

Let's Win The Child At An Early Age

The Church, through various children's ministries, must recognize the importance of winning children if we want them to be faithful Christians once they grow up. Children's Church is a great opportunity, to work with the kids and strengthen spiritual truths through; praising God, teaching God's Word, sharing missionary stories, discipling and a lot of well-organized and planned activities.

Children's Church is an opportunity to prepare children who may one day continue their parents' ministries or follow the ministries of other church leaders. By teaching children how to serve, we'll be preparing children to one day participate in the choir, to serve as altar assistants, to be Sunday School teachers, to be church administrators, leaders, pastors and missionaries, etc. Parents will be more at peace knowing that their children are well taken care of and are learning significant and spiritual truths that will help them in life.

Getting Started?

To start this ministry, the first thing we need is excited passionate laymen that have a love for children and who are willing to serve. The Children's Church program and themes will be presented to the Sunday School Ministries Board. This board will approve them and leaders who will participate. To start this ministry it is necessary to:

- Have a place to gather the kids. This location should not be close to the sanctuary or meeting room where the adult church service is held. This will prevent the kids from being disturbed by the adult's service or vice versa.
- Have a spacious location and a closet to store materials needed for Children's Church which should not be mixed with the Sunday School materials.
- Have furniture suited for children. Otherwise, they will be uncomfortable and this will create discipline issues.
- Have a small pulpit. This can be made from whatever materials are available and decorated with a nice cloth.
- Have offering plates that are just for Children's Church; a table, tablecloth and trays for the Holy Communion; musical instruments; a projector; visual aids; notebooks for the treasurer and secretary and whatever else you think is necessary.



Purpose

- To guide children towards a salvation and holiness experience.
- To disciple children to grow into the image of Jesus: developing a personal relationship with Him, practicing faith, attending services, having personal devotionals, praising and worshiping, serving others, sharing the Gospel and living a life of holiness.

- To educate children about the Church's missionary programs, to teach compassion and community service.
- To educate children to practice stewardship (money, time, talents, belongings, etc.).
- To teach children the value of Christian music through hymns and songs based on Biblical truths.
- To teach children about our Church's doctrine through the Articles of Faith and related topics.
- To prepare children to understand and practice reverence inside the sanctuary and Christian values.
- To give children the opportunity to engage, serve and worship God.
- To prepare children to actively participate in adult worship services when necessary and when they grow up.

Children's Church is a very special time to worship God, where children can participate physically, mentally and spiritually. The main focus has to be worshiping through: music, memorizing and studying the Word of God, praying, fellowshiping, Christian service, public testimony and giving offerings.

Any other activities, such as crafts and games, must revolve around the theme of the day and reinforce it and should be done when the worship service is over. You can be implement modules of game time, crafts, or dramas, if time allows for it.



Leaders

This point is very important and will be decisive in the success or failure of Children's Church. Leaders must be elected by The Local Board of Sunday School Ministries International along with the pastor. Before taking responsibilities, they must spend some time on multiple Sundays watching other leaders and being trained through workshops.

The director and the assistant director of Children's Church cannot have other responsibilities in the church, because Children's Church takes time and energy. It is necessary to choose the right people. If you don't have the proper leaders, it is better to wait to begin this ministry until the right leaders can be found.

The leaders must be trained in Child Psychology, teaching methods, the global program of the Nazarene Church, children's ministries, secretarial and treasury duties. Above all, the leader must have a deep devotion to Christ, loyalty to the Church and must accept the Children's Program of the Church. They must love children and understand them, they must be a sensitive person, they must be patient, have common sense and a sense of humor. They must be enthusiastic about the children's program. They must have good communication skills, along with initiative and vision to plan the Children's Church program. They must be willing to work alongside other ministries.

Director

The Director can be a man or a woman. If there is a man with leadership abilities willing to lead Children's Church, his sole presence will help to control discipline. A husband and wife team can hold the positions of director and assistant director.

Duties:

- Representing Children's Church at all meetings of the Children's Ministries Council.
- Prepare and ask for an annual budget, and keep a record of all expenses.
- Submit an annual plan.
- Determine the number of Children's Church meetings that will be offered, and set age limits for each group.
- Evaluate rooms and select the most appropriate for each age group (if any).
- Recruit and train Children's Church helpers.
- Organize materials/supplies that are going to be used and replace them when necessary.
- Set goals, prepare schedules and make plans with the helpers.
- Lead the Children's Church service or supervise those who lead it.
- Promote Children's Church Ministry.
- Recruit prayer partners for the needs of this ministry.
- Attend the work meetings and training sessions of Children's Church ministries at the local, zone and/or district levels.

Assistant Director

The Assistant Director must be willing to support and help the Director with all aspects of the program.

Music Minister

If you have a large church, this person can be responsible for choosing and leading the music which goes along with the topic/theme that will be presented each week. If the church isn't very big, this responsibility should be taken on by the Director or Assistant Director, they can be assisted by the student officers.

Helpers

The number of Helpers depends on the number of children you have attending Children's Church. If necessary, divide adult volunteers into teams and have them help on a rotating basis; once every other week, once a month, once every two months etc. – according to your need and the number of Helpers you have. It is imperative that the Director and Assistant Director are the same people all the time.

Discipline and Planning

The purpose of discipline is to lead a child, from the need for external authority that controls his actions, to self-control and finally to the Holy Spirit's control.

The standard for Biblical discipline: 2 Tim 3:16 *“Every scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness”.* (NIV)

The foundations of Biblical discipline are: Reverence towards God (Deuteronomy 6:5-7); Respect those in authority (Romans 13:1); Obedience to the Word of God (Proverbs 22:6a); Results in blessing (Proverbs 22:6b).



Disciplinary problems happen when there are components that destroy the educational atmosphere and these include: the teacher, the student, the classroom or the lesson.

The secret to having good discipline in Children's Church is **PRE-PLANNING**. Every minute should be planned for:

- + Materials and leaders must be ready in their places before the first child arrives.
- + Discipline should be firm and fair.
- + Be patient, tolerant and loving, but above all be in charge of the situation.
- + Children will do what you let them do and will test you to see how much you will allow.
- + Write out the rules for Children's Church's with the participation of the children and with them in agreement (let them propose their own rules to follow), and the consequences for breaking the rules. An example of these rules can be: listen when someone else is speaking, do not run, share materials, care for and respect others. Post the rules in a visible location and write them on a sheet of paper to distribute to the children and their parents.
- + The behavior of children whose parents don't attend church will be totally different from the behavior of children whose parents do attend church. You must teach them, from the first Sunday, how to behave. Insist on reverence and attention from the beginning.
- + Allow the children to participate, because if they are involved, they won't have time to misbehave.
- + Alternate your activities: a quiet activity and then an active activity. Children need movement.
- + Check the temperature of the room and allow cross ventilation; varying temperatures affect children because they are very sensitive (heat, cold, poor ventilation, etc.).
- + Ask the children's parents to make sure they are well rested and have a good meal before coming to Children's Church. If they are sick they need to stay home. It is difficult to have a well-run program if you have to deal with a tired, cranky and inattentive child.
- + If a child shows lack of discipline, do not panic or give up. Pray for your ministry and that child. Try to discover what the child's problem is. Call or visit them, befriend them and their parents. Guide, encourage and show them that you are interested in them. Be firm.

- ✦ Never embarrass a child in front of others. Never hit a child. If a child insists on misbehaving, remove him from the group and sit him beside an adult volunteer or a helper.
- ✦ For a child who continually misbehaves, you can use the strategy of "time out": place a chair in a corner away from the activities that are taking place with sign saying "time out" attached to it. Announce that whomever breaks the rules, will have to sit in the "time out" chair; the child must sit, in silence, in the chair (one minute per year of age – if 5 years old, then 5 minutes) until "released" by an adult. At the end of their "time out" ask the child to apologize and promise not to break the rules again. After Children's Church concludes, if the child has been well behaved, praise him and encourage him to continue behaving that way.
- ✦ Give children some responsibility: they like to help.
- ✦ Talk softly, they will pay attention. Insist that they wait their turn to speak and only let them speak one at a time.

Special Cases

- A. Sometimes you will be tried by children with emotional problems. There will be times when your patience is exhausted. **BE CAREFUL! AND REMEMBER THAT THE CHILD IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.** This child needs love and not criticism.
- B. It will be helpful if you have a meeting with the child's Sunday School teacher or school teacher. They may be able to explain the reason for the child's behavior and guide you in some ways to discipline. Do not forget the child's parents, visit them. Talk to them, they will respect and appreciate your interest in their child.
- C. If these emotional or behavioral problems are a result of faulty parenting, talk with the SDMI president of your church to suggest beginning the "School for Parents" ministry (*) which will be an effective way to help parents learn how to improve and/or change the handling and care of their children.
- D. Pray for each child. God will give you wisdom, patience and guidance to work with them and for them.
- E. Some children have serious emotional disorders for various reasons: divorce, alcoholism or other vices, fighting, abuse, etc. These children react with fear, crying, anxiety, hyperactivity, insecurity, withdrawing, and sensitivity or, on the contrary, they may act arrogantly, be challenging and aggressive. Please note that not every child with such characteristics is a disturbed child. A leader or loving and understanding teacher, can help these needy children through the "Pastoral Children" Ministry (*), to minister to the child and family.
- F. There will be children with special educational needs; i.e.: learning difficulties or physical or mental disabilities, they need adequate attention to their needs. The "Gift of Love" Ministry (*), can be an effective resource to help you respond to these children and their parents.

(*)These ministries are new and you will have access to these manuals very soon. Ask your District President for them.

Moral Issues

The subject of sex is an issue that is not always easy to deal with, we should mention that the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene 2013, in Chapter 4, "Current Moral and Social Issues", Section 903.3 talks about the "Abuse of the Unempowered":

"The Church of the Nazarene abhors abuse of any person of any age or sex and calls for increased public awareness through its publications and by providing appropriate educational information.

The Church of the Nazarene reaffirms its historical policy that all those who act under the authority of the Church are prohibited from sexual misconduct and other forms of abuse of the unempowered. When placing people in positions of trust or authority, the Church of the Nazarene will presume that past conduct is usually a reliable indicator of likely future behavior. The Church will withhold positions of authority from people who have previously used a position of trust or authority to engage in sexual misconduct or abuse of the unempowered, unless appropriate steps are taken to prevent future wrongful behavior. Expressions of remorse by a guilty person shall not be considered sufficient to overcome the presumption that future wrongful conduct is likely, unless the expressions of remorse are accompanied by an observable change of conduct for a sufficient length of time, to indicate that a repeat of the wrongful misconduct is unlikely." (2009).

Because the church is not exempt from having among its members and friends troubled people who want to take advantage of innocence of children, we strongly recommend that you carefully chose the leaders who will work with children; this choice should only be made after a thorough evaluation. We wish to call special attention to the leaders of Children's Church. Be extremely careful when dealing with children. They place all of their confidence in the adult leaders and respect authority without question. Therefore, we offer the following suggestions:

1. It is recommended that leaders/workers be both men and women.
2. Be observant of the behavior of your fellow workers in the ministry and report any questionable behavior to your pastor. Be careful and use good judgement, do not make comments or start unfounded rumors (Psalms 101:5, Leviticus 19:16, 1 Timothy 5:13).
3. Plan the activities so that there are always at least 2 adults with the children.
4. If a child tells you that a leader has kissed or touched them inappropriately, believe the child and immediately talk to the SDMI President and the pastor. You should respond in the same way if the child reports abusive behavior by their parents or relatives.
5. If a child needs help to go to the toilet, it is recommended that a woman helps the girls and a man helps the boys.
6. The person that is accompanying the child should always advise another leader where they are going and should return with the child to the activity area as soon as possible.

These suggestions are not intended to create distrust among the leaders/helpers, but if we apply these suggestions to everyone, we will create a safer environment for the children and discourage any improper activity.

WE ARE A HOLINESS CHURCH AND WE MUST PROTECT OUR IMAGE BECAUSE WE PROTRAY THE IMAGE OF CHRIST. IF SECULAR ORGANIZATIONS HAVE THESE CONCERNS, HOW MUCH MORE SHOULD WE BE AWARE AND PROACTIVE?



Division of Groups

Children's Church is open to all children between the ages of 4 and 11 that attend church with or without their parents. In order to meet the goals of Children's Church, the ages of the Children must be taken into account, as well as the size of your facility and the number of staff/volunteers that you have and the number of child that attend regularly. The following recommendations can help you better organize Children's Church, and remember to adjust them to your situation.

- ✦ The little ones, from 0-2 years of age, must be addressed separately. Consider having a Nursery (a room or rooms with cradles and age appropriate toys) for these children.
- ✦ Children who attend preschool should also be in a separate group because their interests and abilities differ widely from older children. Activities and an entire worship service should be prepared at a level appropriate for these children.
- ✦ Children who attend elementary school and who have mastered reading and writing can be grouped in another room.
- ✦ The bigger churches may consider having more groups, one for children in 1st and 2nd grade, one for children in 3rd and 4th grade and one for children in 5th and 6th grade. These divisions make things easier for the leader and more importantly provide a suitable atmosphere for the children. Discussions and applications of Biblical truths to life circumstances are necessary for these age groups.
- ✦ If children in 6th grade feel too "big" and do not want to be in the Children's Church, they may attend the service with the adults.
- ✦ The number of children per group should be between 15 and 20 children so they can be well attended to. If you have a group of 30 children of varied ages they should be divided into smaller groups according to their age.
- ✦ Insist that age divisions established in Children's Church are respected. Do not allow smaller children to be with their older siblings (there will be exceptions that you may have to deal with; use wisdom). Similarly do not allow older children to attend with younger children.
- ✦ If you have limited space meet together at the beginning, but have separate activities planned for the different age groups, this will require extra helpers. If you have no helpers, ask the older children to help you with the younger children.
- ✦ Look for "adoptive" parents for children who attend church without their own parents. If, in your church, there are older children who attend the adult service, ask for "adoptive parents" to be responsible for these children. This will include: having the child sit with them, share their hymnal and Bible, making sure the child behaves appropriately, making the child feel welcome and encouraging the child to enjoy the service.

Preschoolers

Considering the children's skills and abilities, Children's Church must include two groups: separating preschoolers from the elementary students. Provide a program for the preschoolers

with a time of worship to strengthen and expand on the weekly theme through songs, verses, concepts, creative activities and games.

This program needs to have the following elements:

- Transition activities (bathroom break, drink of water, wash hands, stretch legs, store belongings in the right place, etc.)
- Snacks
- Worship Time
- Learning Activities

Although worship will not take up all of the time, the focus of the program should be on teaching preschoolers what worship is and how to worship.

Elementary

Depending on the circumstances, culture, etc. it is recommended that children who are 11 years of age should start to make the transition from Children's Church to the adult worship service, especially if they have been participating in Children's Church since they were little. It is possible that children will start to get bored with Children's Church if they have spent a lot of time in the program and this could result in behavioral problems.

To make this transition with the 11 year olds easier, take deliberate steps to integrate them into the adult worship service. Take them to the adult service regularly, starting once every three months and then once a month or more.

If older children are part of Children's Church, we recommend the following:

- Ask them to lead part of the service.
- Let them participate as ushers, song leaders, readers of the Bible or poems, etc.
- Integrate them into puppet groups, dramas and mimes, giving them the opportunity to sometimes present the message.
- Organize them in choir and music groups.

Including all ages in one group is not as effective for teaching, but if there is no alternative, we suggest the following activities to resolve difficulties this may cause:

- Use a variety of music that will interest all ages.
- Use visual aids to teach the songs and for presenting the lesson/message.
- Separate children by age group for the activities. If it is not possible, ask the older students to help with the younger students. This will make the older kids feel important and teach them to work as part of a team.

Like the older children, the younger children should also participate in the adult service on occasion. We suggest you make arrangements with your pastor to allow the children to participate in the adult service once every 2 or 3 months.

Discipling children is an important job and a lot of responsibility. Organizing an effective Children's Church is not easy, but with careful planning, Children's Church can be one of the most useful ministries to provide discipling for our boys and girls.

Children's Church Officers



Depending on the number of children who participate in Children's Church, you may elect officers for different ministries, as follows:

- Choose children wisely. You may want to consult with them beforehand, give them the job description and explain what their future responsibilities will be.
- Explain the needs and the vacancies, about the election, what will be done and what it implies.
- Prepare, in advance, ballots with the names of the children you recommend. Have the children mark with an "X" or underline the name of the child they prefer. Talk about the characteristics that the elected children should have.
- Count the votes in front of them and check them off on a chalkboard, so that you can recognize children who are elected.
- Give each elected child a sheet of paper listing their responsibilities, along with suggestions on how to dress properly, how to behave and how to do their job.
- Talk to their parents to let them know the results of the election and to ask for their support in helping their child perform their job.
- Prepare a special service to introduce new officers, to pray for them and to allow them to be congratulated and encouraged.
- Involve your helpers in monitoring the performance of the Children's Church Officers.

Job Description for the Children's Church Officers

Student Director – Helps the Director prepare the program and lead it, inviting other children to help with the service. The Student Director is in charge of; having someone pray, having someone read the Bible, having someone give the announcements, having someone lead the songs or the Student Director can do any of the listed jobs him/herself.

Ambassador - Assists in the Sunday services, distributes the song books or hymnals, hands out the bulletins, welcomes and dismisses the children in the service, greets children as they arrive, helps serve the Lord's Supper, visits children's church members and/or elderly church members who are sick, etc.

Trustee – Is in charge of receiving the tithes and offerings (making sure they and/or other children are prepared ahead of time to take the offering at the appropriate time); along with the Treasurer, the Trustee will count the money and register it in the treasure's notebook; they will help set up the Children's Church area by arranging chairs and tables beforehand and putting everything away at the end of the service, etc.

Secretary - Will register the children who attend Children's Church, recording each child's name, address, date of birth and telephone. The Secretary will take attendance every Sunday and keep of record of each Sunday's attendance. They will also keep track of birthdays. All of this information should be kept in a special notebook and be under the supervision of an adult.

Treasurer - Will use a special notebook where, along with the trustee, they will count and record the tithes and offerings taken at each service, and they will be responsible for keeping these records. They will be in charge of taking the offerings to the Church Treasurer in order to be registered and included in the [SDMI] offering. This should all be done with the help and supervision of an adult leader.

Remember, you, as a leader, will model these jobs for the children, supervising and helping them do their job better each time.

Activities

Transition Time

If in your Church, Children's Church meets on Sunday mornings, provide time for transition between the ending of Sunday School and the beginning of Children's Church. Remember that the children need to go to the bathroom, get a drink of water, stretch, wash their hands, etc.

The Director must be present to welcome and say good bye to children. We strongly recommended that you do not dismiss the children until the Adult service is over.



During the transition time, allow the children to be active; have them prepare the area where the worship service is going to be held; have them set up the chairs, arrange the flowers, distribute the song books, bring in the instruments, etc. (This is a good time for the Secretary and Treasurer to make sure they have their notebooks ready for recording their information.) You can also use this time to have children practice what they will be reading and singing in the service.

Some children will just want to talk with the leaders/helpers. This is an excellent opportunity to ask them about their families, schools, friends, pets, etc. Having these informal conversations with them will help you and your helpers get to know the children better. It is also a good time to plan special activities with the children (i.e. Christmas party, Valentine's Day celebration, etc.).

Worship Time

This is the most important time and should be taken seriously, as children are led to think about God, about Christ's sacrifice upon the cross, about how Christ is no longer in the tomb, and about Bible characters whose stories can help them and inspire them throughout their lives.

Each song, prayer, Bible reading and message should be anointed by the Holy Spirit, and you must prepare yourself by spending time and being committed to praying and reading the Bible.

The children should be aware of the formality of this special time, which will allow the children to participate in worship. They will pay more attention if they need to fulfill certain responsibilities.

Example of a Service:

1. Prayer and Welcome (welcome new children and adult visitors).
2. Music (2 or 3 songs with motions, songs that correspond to the theme of the day)
3. Scripture reading
4. Visual (drama, mime, puppets, video)
5. Offering (can be received with background music)
6. Music (2 songs of reflection)
7. Message or lesson (Bible stories should speak for themselves. Never read it, learn it and tell it from memory. Look children in the face as you speak to them.)
8. Prayer or altar time.
9. Announcements and Birthdays.
10. Dismissal (made by a leader or the Ambassador [Children's Church Officer])

Let the Holy Spirit guide you so that you are sure of the appropriate moment to have an altar call so that the children will have an opportunity to meet with our Lord and Savior.

Methods and strategies should vary every Sunday as repetition bores children and they may think that there is only one way to conduct a service. Be creative and vary the order of worship, testimonies, special guests, children's lessons, etc. To give the message, you can use a flannel board, projector, videos, movies, chalkboard, whiteboard, and many other methods that you may have available. If you do not know how to use them, ask about them and learn to use them efficiently.

Activity Time

Plan these in advance (not on Saturday night). They cannot be noisy, especially if you are located near the sanctuary. They can be games, Bible puzzles, quizzes, and memorization. This would be a good time to include some Children's Bible Quizzing games. Remember that these games should be done after worship and as complementary activities to the worship time.

Plan gift giving projects for special days: Mother's Day, Father's Day, for the missionary's, for the elderly, for the pastor(s), etc. Plan visits to a nursing home or orphanage and take gifts made by the children.

The children must participate in all activities. You can make a list of the necessary activities for them to do and let them choose what they like best. This way you will discover their talents. At the end of this manual, in the attachments, you will find a form for the children to complete and they can serve according to their abilities and desires.

For many people, the games can seem useless, meaningless, and a waste of time, or just a way to use up the time; however, there are three important purposes of games that we must not forget:

1. The children learn to play.
2. The children release their energy.
3. Games encourage the development of motor skills, muscle coordination and improve physical skills.

As the leader of Children's Church, you should consider Activity Time as an important time for learning. You can play quite games, so that the adults won't be disturbed, and so you don't lose the reverent attitude of the service. The games should correspond to the subject/theme for each Sunday.

Schedule

The following schedule has had good results: 1. Transition 2. Worship/Prayer 3. Activity.

The amount of time for each activity depends on the program you've planned for each day.

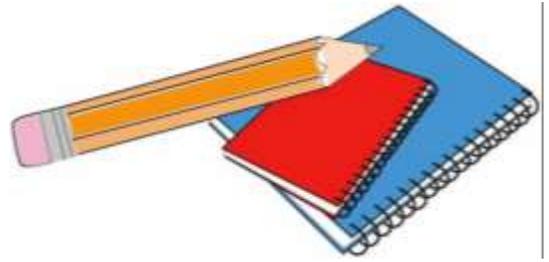
Every Sunday will be different. We suggest 25 minutes be allowed for the transition time, 30 minutes for worship, and the rest for activities.

Give priority to worship time, if you begin with worship, the kids are tired of sitting as they've just come from Sunday School; if you start with the activities, you may not have time for worship and may be interrupted when parents arrive to pick up their children.

Try to dismiss Children's Church at about the same time as the adult service ends.

Teaching Materials

This is a list of basic items you will need. It will be good to have a cabinet/container exclusively for Children's Church supplies.



Bibles, chorus books, hymnals, blackboard, song sheets, visual aids, games, glue, colored pencils, scissors, rulers, crayons, markers, writing paper, construction paper, vases, pulpit, offering plates, offering envelopes, tissues, toilet paper, wash clothes, clothes hangers, First aid kit, notebooks [for recording the offerings and keeping record of the attendance], instruments and anything that makes the teaching and learning processes easier.

Bible Memorization



The purpose of teaching children to memorize the Bible has its Biblical basis in Psalms 119:11 "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (NIV)

Each lesson, Bible story, or topic should include a Bible verse to memorize.

The mind that God has given us must be taught during childhood. If we teach at an early age using different methods to help children retain the Word of God, then they will not turn from it. (Proverbs 22:6).

For Today and Tomorrow

Concern is growing each day as we see the lack of spiritual defenses in those around us in times of indecision, temptations, and trials as well as a lack of worship, praise and prayer. In a wonderful way, the Word of God shows us how to intelligently conduct ourselves in all situations we may encounter in our daily lives.

Today is a great opportunity, tomorrow is going to be too late. The eternity of these children is in our hands; today we have the opportunity to teach and show them how to accept Jesus as their Savior.

Children's Church must be designed effectively so that children will remain in the church. Involvement in church will give them spiritual strength; will guide them in serving God and in their life as a Christian. It will help them reflect the image of Christ and train them for leadership now and in the future.

Does this mean that the little conniver, restless, crying, laughing and boisterous child will suddenly become a quiet and an obedient child? NO. But it means that he can be taught, educated, and trained in the things of God. That child will come to love God with all his heart and he will come to serve his church and neighbors. Then we will be sending these children into a world that they can transform. And how will they succeed? With the help of parents and teachers who know and model the love of God.

This is the best opportunity we will have to guide the minds and hearts of these children.

"IT IS OUR PRIVILEGE TO WIN THESE CHILDREN FOR CHRIST AND TO GUIDE THEIR STEPS IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE. ALL THE WORK AND EFFORT WE PUT INTO IT, WILL BE WORTH THE COST".

Suggestions

- The emphasis on learning depends on you and your group of children. The ability to memorize varies with each child.
- Don't structure memorization so that children feel that they are not capable of memorizing if they don't learn the complete text.
- Use games and activities that help children have a good time learning and memorizing the verses (i.e. riddles, puzzles, coloring sheets, concentration games, contests, singing, visual aids, etc.).
- Find verses whose total message is clear and that are consistent with the theme of the day.
- Encourage children with praise, a printed certificate, a New Testament, a framed picture of the memory verse, etc. all these will help maintain interest and encourage children to keep memorizing.
- Bible Memorization can be taught at the beginning or at the end of the lesson time.
- You can add music to the scripture to make it easier to remember (a melody they already know works well).
- Children can memorize small sections or complete chapters of the Book of Psalms.
- Children can memorize the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Beatitudes, etc.
- Guide the children in finding the message or daily application of the scripture by sharing your own life experiences and examples.
- Explain the meaning of words, the location of places, customs, etc. using words that the children can understand.
- Do not make it a routine to take a long time for Bible memorization or you will lose the interest of the child.
- You, as a leader, should know the text and daily live out what you are teaching (be an example).

Evangelism



When is a child ready to accept Christ? When is a child ready to understand the meaning of salvation? The answer is simple, when the child feels the need: he will realize the forces of good and evil are at battle within him, and he will recognize his sin and his need for a Savior.

This will happen in different ways and in different circumstances. One of the most beautiful experiences that a teacher or leader of children can have is guiding these children to accept Christ at an early age. Jesus loves children and He brings them to Him through a simple and genuine faith. We have a beautiful message of salvation and it is vital that this message reaches children, changes their lives and helps them fulfill the purpose that God has for them.

Some Suggestions:

You, as a leader of Children's Church, will have many opportunities to invite the children to make a decision for Christ as their Savior. Each child is a person with free will, but very pliable and easily swayed to be led to the Lord.

- ❖ Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. When you feel the Lord is moving within the group that is the appropriate time to invite girls and boys to accept Jesus; even though you may not have planned it as part of the activities for that day.
- ❖ Know your children. Be alert to the needs and feelings of individual children. Even if an invitation is not made to the group to accept Christ, you can pray with that one child who is ready to accept Jesus. Therefore, it is good for you and your helpers to take time to have meaningful conversations with the children during the transition time (between Sunday School and Children's Church). You will get to know them better as they talk about their families, school, games, friends and certainly their problems. Do not forget to visit or call them when they do not attend a Children's Church service.
- ❖ Have a plan. Know what to do when a child asks you how to be saved.
- ❖ Evangelistic Invitation: Use concrete words. Invite the children to kneel before the altar (you can use a chair for this purpose) and lead them step by step:
 - a. Allow the child to respond spontaneously.
 - b. Have him confess his sins and ask the Lord for forgiveness (do not do it for him).
 - c. Have the child verbally state that he believes that Jesus can forgive him.
 - d. Have a Bible ready and open to read the appropriate passages.
 - e. Have the child (verbally) Thank Jesus for what He has done for the child.
- ❖ When there is an invitation and a child kneels before the altar:
 - a. Gently put your hand on the child's shoulder, call them by name and if you do not know their name, ask them what their name is.

- b. Ask them why they are at the altar. If their answer is not what you expected, accept it as something genuine; children often go to the altar to pray for the health of a family member or for other reasons. Others will not know why they came to the altar. If they represent a need, pray for these children and the need that they brought to the altar, for the message of the day, and then dismiss them to their place.
 - c. If the child expresses the need for salvation, review with them the plan of salvation:
 1. Sin separates you from God; Romans 3:23.
 2. God loves you; John 3:16 and Romans 5:8.
 3. Accept Jesus as your Savior, repenting of your sins. 1 John 1:9 and Romans 10:9.
 4. Now, you belong to Christ! Tell others what Jesus has done for you. John 1:12.
 - d. When the child finishes praying, ask them what God has done for them. If they were forgiven, the child will say so. If the child does not know, you should repeat the above steps. Ask if they understood. Let them pray again. If there are still questions or uncertainty, it is possible that they are not ready. End the prayer time by thanking God for this child. Let the child know that you are happy with their decision to go to the altar. Let them know that the door remains open for next time, when he understands his need.
 - e. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the work that God is doing in the lives of all the children and this child in particular. Pray that the Lord and the leaders will help this child in his spiritual growth.
- ❖ Do not force the child, allow him to respond freely. Let the Holy Spirit do His work, and remember that you are only an instrument in the hands of the Lord.

The responsibility that God has placed in your hands is great. Do not be discouraged or afraid, the one who called you and placed on your heart this ministry to children, will help you, guide you and use you so that many boys and girls will come to know HIM as their personal Redeemer. Be guided by the Lord, **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

Recognition Time

Everyone, including children, need to be recognized for their achievements and progress.

Once a year, plan a special service to graduate the 12 year olds that have been attending Children's Church. They are ready to go to the adult service and leave behind this phase of their childhood even though their years in Children's Church were important.

Plan this event during the adult service. Children can be in charge of the service and the Director or possibly the Student Director can bring a short message. If you have photos, slides or video of the children, this would be very interesting to show to the congregation. You can give a small narrative describing personal and spiritual growth for each child during their time in Children's Church and give a simple certificate or gift to each one. Encourage the congregation to continue praying for them, to congratulate them on this new stage of their lives and to welcome them to the adult service. This is an excellent opportunity to invite the parents of the children who do not regularly attend to church.



It is very important that children, who have given their hearts to the Lord, be encouraged and guided to begin discipleship that can lead them to baptism and membership. Start a Children's Disciple Ministry: train adult leaders to be disciplers and use the following materials: "Young Believer's Discipleship Series Pack" followed by "So . . . You Want to Follow Jesus?" packet. (These materials are available from the Regional Discipleship Ministries Office or Nazarene Publishing House.)

Suggested Lessons and Themes to Use in Children's Church

Discipleship and Doctrine

- Articles of Faith for Children.
- The Ten Commandments.
- The Lord's Prayer, prayer and the elements of prayer.
- What is the Apostles' Creed? (Explain and memorize)
- The Fruit of the Spirit
- What are personal devotions, and how to do I do them?
- Stewardship (time, talent, money, my body, Creation, possessions).
- Practical Christian Living (honesty, truthfulness, respect, responsibility, courtesy, friendship, etc.).
- The Bible.
- The Church.

Service

- What are "gifts"?
- Discovering what my gift is.
- How to prepare a devotional for a service and how to direct a service.
- How to prepare a Biblical reflection and how to present it.
- How to prepare a special (singing, testimony, recitation, etc.) and how to present it.
- How to lead a worship service and then be prepared to do so once a month or once every two months.
- What is "service" and what does it look like? (This lesson could end by having the children serve by cleaning and/or performing maintenance in the Children's Church area.)

History of the Church

- How the Church of the Nazarene Began.
- The Protestant Reformation.

Praise and Worship

- Teach new songs with Biblical content.
- Teach hymns, explaining the meaning of unfamiliar words and tell the stories behind some of the hymns.
- What other forms of worship are there?
- What role do instruments have in Worship? (Allow the children to make simple instruments to accompany their songs.)

Evangelism

- What is The Great Commission.
- What is evangelism? (Plan an evangelistic service; have the children make and distribute invitations to this special service.)
- What are some simple methods of evangelism. (Practice these methods with the children in Children's Church).

- What does evangelism look like? (Go outside to evangelize around the church using the methods you've previously taught and practiced).

Missions

- What is "Missions"? (Use videos, missionary songs and share the latest missionary news)
- What is Alabaster? (Make alabaster boxes or envelopes for this special offering.)
- What is a Missionary? (Write letters or make cards for a missionary or missionary family.)
- Present a monthly missionary study.
- Read a missionary book and discuss it.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Allow the children to receive Holy Communion at least three times a year. Ask the pastor to lead this special time (the Ambassador can assist the pastor).
- Each month, celebrate the children who have birthdays (inside or outside the church)
- Visit children or sick siblings, elderly, orphans, factories, zoos, etc.
- Make cards or write letters of encouragement to children who have not recently attended Children's Church.
- Have a Kid's club on Saturday morning or a homework workshop.
- Have Lock-ins or retreats.
- Have a mini Olympics or other competitions.
- Invite an expert to talk about health issues (food and nutrition, oral health, accident prevention, personal hygiene, etc.).
- Present the biography (life and work) of great men and women of humanity.
- Day Camps
- Children's Choir
- Children's Bible Quizzing.
- Community service projects
- Participate in special programs with dramas and/or songs (Easter, Christmas, Missions, Children's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparents Day, etc.).
- Teach and/or learn to play an instrument.
- Have a craft day.

Children's Church leaders and helpers can be appointed to different responsibilities if the size of the Church permits it:

- a) Program Director
- b) Director of Music
- c) Activity Director
- d) Project Manager during the week

If the size does not allow it, the director will have to take charge of all these.

Attachments

Form for Adult Volunteers

Use the following form to request adult volunteers.
If possible, give this form to all church members.

Form for Children Who Want to Participate in Children's Church

This form will be filled out by children wanting to participate in Children's Church.
It will give the Director an idea of what their abilities are and how they desire to service in
Children's Church.

Children's Church Needs Your Help

Please fill in your name, phone#, address and mark with an X how you can help.

Name _____ Phone # _____

Address _____

- ___ I will help every Sunday service of the year.
- ___ I will help ___ Sunday a month, or ___ months of the year.
- ___ I will help supervise the children.
- ___ I will help with the music (piano, guitar, etc.).
- ___ I will be responsible for craft projects and I will teach them to the children.
- ___ I will help the children memorize the Bible verses.
- ___ I will share the lesson/message every Sunday.
- ___ I will be an "adoptive" parent to a child whose parents do not attend church.
- ___ I will help with a snack for the children.

Other tasks you would consider helping with or that you think are needed.

I Want To Help In Children's Church

My Name is _____

My Phone # is _____

I Want to Help by:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Bringing Flowers ___ | Singing Alone ___ |
| Reading the Bible ___ | Singing in a group ___ |
| Playing an instrument ___ What Instrument? _____ | Taking the Offering ___ |
| Reciting a poem ___ | Praying ___ |
| Cleaning and arranging the Children's Worship area ___ | |

What day will you do it? _____

Other Things I Would Like To Help With
