

03 - WHY PRIORITIZE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

A Great Church ... h.) Reaches the Next Generation

- ✓ In church, every age group is important! Youth, young adults, the middle-aged, seniors ... they're all important! But children are *especially* important. (Why is that so?)

1. They're Not Effectively Being Reached – (Why Not?)

a. Churches Can Be Inflexible to Change

- ✓ The older a congregation is, the more it tends to resist change. But outdated methods will never reach the next generation. **The VISION stays the same, but our METHODS need to change.**

b. Preference Over Purpose

- ✓ A church is preference-driven when it's more concerned with what its *members want*, than it is with accomplishing its God-given *purpose*.
- ✓ We can't be bound by our preferences. We must care about fulfilling the purpose of the church – reaching, maturing, and mobilizing the next generation. (This may necessitate laying down personal preferences and updating the building, worship style & programs.)

Philippians 2:4 – “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (CEV)

1 Cor. 9:19-21 – “Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, I have made myself to everyone, in order to win more people. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews...To those who are without the law, like one without the law...to win those without the law.” (CSB)

c. The Church Hasn't Made It a Priority

- ✓ Children's ministry is viewed as “less important” than our ministry to adults. (Consequently, the children lack resources and volunteers.)

2. It Helps the Church to Grow

- ✓ Attracting Kids Attracts Families. In most families (80%), it's the mom who decides where the family will go to church. Most often she bases her decision on her children. She looks for a church that (i) *has* children's ministry; (ii) her children *enjoy* it; and (iii) the church does it with *excellence*. Attracting families grows the church.

3. It Lays a Foundation In Their Lives

a. The Most Formative Years

- ✓ In their first eight years, children are very pliable and easy to shape. Like clay, they get harder as they get older. The devil understands this. We have a limited amount of time to lay a solid foundation.

b. It Affects Both the Present and the Future

- ✓ Not only does children's ministry benefit our children *now*, but it helps shape who they become in the future.

c. Children Are Our Future

- ✓ Children are the future bosses, teachers, and leaders of the church. Ministering to kids today is an investment in the future.

4. It Fulfills the Great Commission

Mark 16:15 – “Go into all the world and preach the good news to everyone.” (NLT)

Matt. 28:19 – “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples...” (GNB)

a. Children Need to Be Evangelized

- ✓ Kids usually reach the age of accountability by 8 years old. They need to know the truth and to understand right from wrong.

b. Children Are the Church's Biggest Mission Field

- ✓ It's easy to get children saved! When adults hear the gospel, on average, 1 out of 20 will give their lives to Christ. With children, that number goes up to 19 out of 20.
- ✓ Of All Existing Christians – 86% received Christ before they reached their 15th birthday. Another 10% were saved between the ages of 16-30. Only 4% of existing Christians were saved after the age of 30. That means the sooner we can get to people, the more likely they are to spend eternity with the Lord.

c. Children Are "Ripe for Harvest"

John 4:35 – "You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest." (NLT)

d. There's a Shortage of Workers

Matt. 9:37-38 – "The harvest is [indeed] plentiful, but the workers are few. So, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." (AMP)

- ✓ Pray for workers. Be willing to be sent.

Isa. 6:8 – "Then I heard the Lord asking, 'Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?' I said, 'Here I am. Send me.'" (NLT)

5. Kids Need to Be Discipled

a. Children's Ministry Is Not a Babysitting Service

- ✓ They don't just *color* while their parents learn God's Word. We teach kids, too!

b. They Need to Be Taught God's Word

John 21:15 – "...do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'" (NKJV)

- ✓ In this passage, Jesus makes two statements: "Feed my sheep" (v. 16-17), and "Feed my lambs" (v. 15). "Sheep" are full grown. "Lambs" are the young. Jesus commands us to feed His Word to children, not just adults.

Isa. 28:9 – "Who is the LORD trying to teach? To whom is he explaining the message? To those just weaned from milk! To those just taken from their mother's breast!" (NET)

- ✓ Even the very young can learn. We just adjust the *amount* and the *way* we teach them. But the devil is no respecter of persons. He tempts and attacks kids, too! They need God's Word.

6. There's a Battle for our Kids

a. The Devil Has a Vision for Kids

- ✓ He gets down on their level and uses every means possible to influence them for evil – (media, games, TV ...)

b. McDonald's Has a Vision for Kids

- ✓ Unlike fancy restaurants, McDonald's loves kids! They decorate for kids. They put toys in their Happy Meals. They make it fun! They attract kids. Consequently, they attract families.

c. The Church Needs to Have a Vision for Kids

- ✓ We can't sit idly by as the devil and the world attract our kids! We need to put at least as much effort into reaching the next generation as *they* do.