



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TRAINING MANUAL





CORNERSTONE Kids

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1) THE HEART OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Within the life of the local church, several ministries exist and are needed as part of that church's functioning. One such ministry is Children's Ministry. The response that churches have towards this and other ministries will greatly determine the fruit that is seen within that ministry and throughout that church.

Children's ministry is in no way an obligated baby-sitting service but rather a purposeful ministry within the Church. This is why before we even begin to learn practical methods of teaching children, we need to make sure we have the right heart for Children's Ministry. With the right heart, we will pursue to lead this ministry with passion, honour, and faithful obedience to God.

God Values Children

- **Let the children come to Me**

When Jesus was teaching and ministering to people He made sure that the children were not excluded...

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 19:14)



In the same way we need to make sure that children can come to Him, and that we do not hinder them in both receiving and giving as God has planned for them.

We must not only create environments but also a culture within church that allows our children to approach Jesus. Jesus wants to meet with our children. We must desire for our children to meet Jesus. We must help them desire for themselves the need to meet Jesus. We must then create such opportunities.

- **Train them in My ways**

God promises that if we “**Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.**” (Proverbs 22:6)

It is our responsibility as adults to be **training** our children. Not on some of the ways but *ALL* the ways of the Lord. If children do not know Jesus or what the Bible says how will they know how to follow and serve Him in everything.

As Children’s Church leaders we need to present the Gospel as irresistible and to provide a safe place where children can be growing in their relationship with Jesus, experiencing the Holy Spirit and using the gifts God has given them to spread the Gospel. Of course always making every effort to partner with parents in this training process.



- **Don’t cause them to stumble**

By disregarding training our children, we are setting them up to fail. We need to consider “**whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great milestone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.**” (Matthew 18:6)

We can often think that teaching our children sins is the only way to cause them to stumble. Actually, withholding Jesus from our children causes them to stumble. This includes presenting a false Jesus, not giving them freedom to grow intimate with Jesus or not showing them how to know Jesus. These and other such obstacles that can cause them to lead sinful lives.

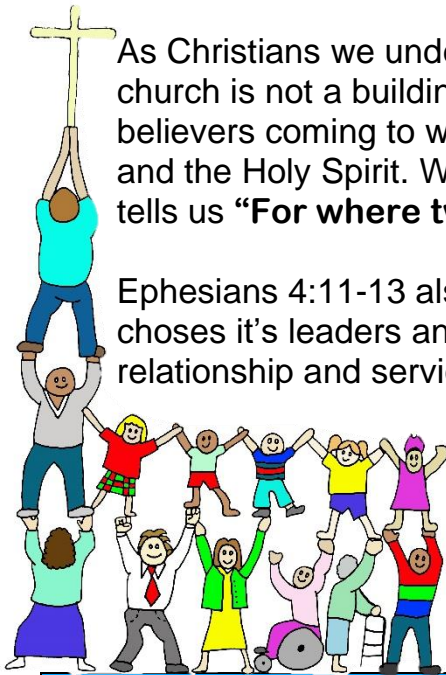
The consequences of this are severe! Why? Because this is of such significant importance to Jesus, and so it should be with us. Jesus wants a personal relationship with our children, and when we withhold Him from our children, Jesus says serious consequence follows.

We should feel the command to teach Jesus to our children. When our children meet Jesus, they can meet our great King, they can fall in love with Him and desire to pursue a personal relationship with Him.

Children’s Church should provide opportunities for children to intimately meet with Jesus and learn to follow His ways.

2) WHY DO WE DO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

Some key wording we like to get right as a start, is we don't talk about Sunday School. How many children want to go to school on a Sunday? That name alone can keep children away. We prefer to talk about Children's Church. Our children are coming to church, not school. Our heart is to offer church and the life found in church, not the structures of school.



As Christians we understand the importance of church. We know that church is not a building nor an organisation but rather the gathering of believers coming to worship, experience and learn more about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We know God is present at church as Matthew 18:20 tells us **“For where two or three gather in My name, there I am also.”**

Ephesians 4:11-13 also teaches us that church is part of God's plan as He chooses it's leaders and equips them so that they may grow in their relationship and service to Him.

It is exciting that when the church gathers every person present has the opportunity to both receive and give and this is pleasing to God. Our children need exactly the same opportunities.

| Receive: | Give: |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Know and love Jesus | • Make Him known |
| • Taught the Word | • Teach others |
| • Prayed for | • Pray for others |
| • Learn from others God has gifted | • Use the gifts God has given us |
| • Experience the presence of the Holy Spirit | • Worship God together |
| • Receive counsel | • Lead others |
| • And more ... | • And more ... |

Why separate children from adults for church meetings?

The important question to ask is if children are receiving everything they could be while sitting in adult services? Are they given opportunities to “receive and to give” as mentioned above. Are they knowing Jesus more and making Him known weekly at church? To fully answer this question we first need to look at how children differ to adults.

- **Attention Span**

Children have a very short attention span. It can be said that the child's age is the number of minutes you have before the child will lose concentration. This means for a 5-year-old you have 5 minutes of talking before they stop listening and following what you are teaching. Adults however can concentrate for much longer periods of time.

- **Experience**

Jesus used the life experiences of the people to help them understand what He was teaching. To shepherds he spoke about lost sheep and to farmers He spoke about vines. Children experience very different things to adults. Being bullied, not making a team or other experiences common to a child will not be covered in adult services. Children also miss out on being able to pray for and encourage others with similar circumstances as them.

- **How children learn**

Children learn one simple idea at a time, with each new one building on to the next. Too much information at once can be too confusing.

Adults are able to learn by simply hearing what is being said. Children learn best if they can "experience" the lesson. The more senses involved the more learning will occur. Lessons need lots of **repetition** and to be most beneficial should include as many of the below as possible.

| Hearing | Seeing | Actively involved |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Hear the lesson | See written word | Doing actions |
| Songs | See pictures | Drawing/Writing |
| | See it acted out | Games |
| | | Making things |
| | | Smelling (e.g. baking bread) |



Children's Church is one of the ministries within the church so the vision, values, message of the church are exactly the same, just presented in a way more suited to children.

3) WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AS A LEADER?

- **Value God's children**

Your perspective of Children's Church and each unique individual child needs to match God's perspective. Knowing just how important children are to God and the consequences for causing them to stumble should help keep you in check. When you begin to realize that you are in one of the most important ministries in the church body you move from scraping by with doing the bare minimum to striving for excellence in obediently achieving God's plan.

If your perspective or your view of Children's Church is wrong, your approach to Children's Church will be wrong. Does God care any less for children than adults? No! Correct your perspective. Does God only call adults to see His Kingdom advance? No! Correct your perspective. Are children not able to be filled with the gifts of the Spirit? No! Correct your perspective. Can children teach us about relationship with Jesus? Yes! Correct your perspective.

With the right perspective and heart you will be able to dream big dreams, rejoice in the opportunities you have, enjoy the fruit of your giving, find value in the body and live out this call on your life passionately.

- **You are called by God for this**

Being a Children's Church leader is a huge responsibility and that is why it is essential that your motives for doing so are correct. If your motives are wrong, your service is wrong. There is often sacrifice in serving God (time, energy, resources), and if you only seek personal gain, you will feel frustration constantly.

Young leaders often fall into the trap of joining Children's Church simply to avoid main services and while their energy and connection with children can be a huge asset it is vital that their motives be nothing else but to obediently lead children to Jesus.

Ephesians 2:10 says, **"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."**

Getting involved in Children's Ministry needs to be rooted in responding to His call to walk in the good works He has prepared for you. This should not be service to the elders, the church or the children, but service to God. Through your obedience God will equip and anoint you for the task at hand.

- **Continually keep growing**

It is essential that you keep your relationship with Jesus strong and intimate. You need to be spending time in the Word, praying, having quiet times in His presence, continually asking the Holy Spirit to teach and guide you, attend services, listen to messages you may have missed while teaching as well as get involved in a life group. Nothing can compare to teaching a lesson Spirit filled with a convicted heart.

Hebrews 5 and 6 shows us that we need to move from being babes, always needing the simple message of the Gospel explained to us, to mature teaching. Although we need to learn and prepare we never teach from a place of arrogance but rather from a place that fully relies on the Holy Spirit to unfold His plan for each lesson.

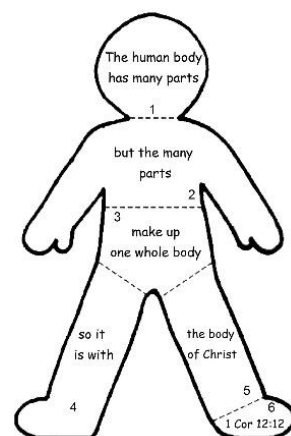
- **Use the gifts God has given you**



There is no “personality type” required to be involved in children's ministry. Whether you are young, old, loud or quiet, relational or administrative it does not matter. What matters is you are walking in obedience to God. He will use you the way you are for the plans He has.

1 Corinthians 12:18 says “**But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose.**”

There are so many areas to be involved in within Children's ministry such as welcoming, registration, media, special events, skits, puppetry, set up, teaching, worship, leading meetings and so many more things that it is so refreshing to know that God arranges us just as He wants us to be and in so doing forms a strong functional body.



- **Be accountable**

A church is trusted to care for the children in that church. The church is therefore accountable for who is asked to lead our children. Due to the sad realities of child abuse prevalent in society, bringing on leaders to lead our children requires accountability checks.

We therefore do require all leaders to have partaken in our DNA course, so that they know the values and identity of our church and thus not teach contrary to who we are as a church (e.g. Don't give the elders titles, we don't baptise babies, we desire for the Holy Spirit in our lives).

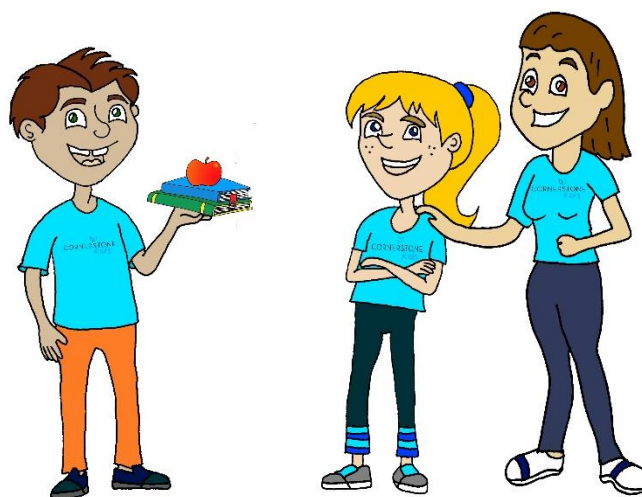
We then require leaders to be in a Life group. Here they are building relationships and are continually being "fed" themselves. They are also in relationships with others who can speak into their lives.

Leaders are asked to get a police clearance and sign a declaration. This keeps the church accountable to leaders entrusted and allows the church to protect all children, which every parent expects.

Throughout the year there are also leaders' meetings and training sessions and we require all leaders to attend.

Accountability checks:

- ☐ DNA course
- ☐ Life group
- ☐ Police clearance
- ☐ Signed declaration
- ☐ Regularly attend training



*Ask God what your role is in ministering to children
and then OBEY!*

4) SOME THINGS TO CHECK

When you value Children's Church, then you choose to give of your best. You feel that it deserves nothing less. When you don't value the ministry, then you will easily feel justified giving half-effort to this.

Here are some important checks to every now and then go through for yourselves and even when mentoring new leaders.

- **What are your motives?**

Are you there to escape adults' church? Are you there because of a sense of duty? Are you there to impress church leadership to eventually call you into another ministry role?

Your motive needs to be obedience to God and wanting to serve God in whatever you do. Desire to be a real blessing, committing yourself without selfish intentions. This needs to be obedience to call, not sacrifice to impress. Honour those you serve - the team you join, the children, and the church community.

- **How is your heart?**

Is your heart pure? (Psalm 24:3) Although we all do still struggle with character and sin, if you are knowingly acting in sin, or not addressing character issues, then you are not in a place to lead another person. You need a season to work out such issues that hold you back from God using you to a greater potential.


This is where accountable relationships are key. Keep your heart open to such people to help you grow (as we all need). If your heart is open to God, and your life is growing in Spiritual maturity, then you are able to lead.

- **Are your hands available?**

Children's ministry is practical work in so many ways. It will demand time, effort, energy, resources and more. It requires you to come with open hands ready to serve and be used. God can use anyone who comes to Him with the right heart and available hands, even if you feel that you do not have much to offer. He knows your gifting; He gave it to you.

Take ownership of your roles and responsibilities. Success in any team requires each individual to be prepared, ready to serve and be used wherever. In doing this we not only limit the chances of leaders becoming overburdened but together are able to do so much more.

- How do you know if you own it?



Do I own it?

- ☐ I am doing this for God?
- ☐ I am devoted to the task? (Acts 2:42)
- ☐ I am continually growing in my relationship with God and my abilities in children's ministry?
- ☐ I am a self-motivated member of the team always looking for ways to contribute?
- ☐ I am dreaming big for children's ministry?
- ☐ I am well prepared, committed and servant hearted?

The children's ministry team can be a dynamic team made up of a variety of characters. God delights in variety as He created such. Allow for a variety of people to serve on this team. But do apply the checks as indicated above to ensure the right people are given this awesome responsibility.

OWN IT!

God is glorified in this ministry, the church grows stronger, the kingdom advances, lives are impacted for eternity.
You get to be a part of this. Wow!

5) BEING PREPARED

Being unprepared for any event is daunting and will make the task ahead difficult to do and there will be little success. You don't have to learn the hard way. Simply be prepared for what you are expected to do and be extra prepared in case adaptation is needed.

Below are some practical areas worth addressing before looking at the general expectations required of you.

- **Prep:** Use the week to prepare well for your lesson, not only Saturday evening. Pray through the content. Let it work through you first. It is easier to teach content when it has impacted your life.
Children love to ask challenging questions so have scriptures ready for those you may think will arise. Rather than giving them an incorrect answer tell them you will get back to them – and then promptly make sure you do so.
- **Plan:** Plan ahead to have the needed resources for the lesson, especially the craft. Keep a plan for time, knowing when to call children in, to start the lesson, to start the craft etc. Bad timing/planning means you either finish the lesson too early and have to make a plan for the rest of the time or, you don't finish your lesson and leave out some important parts.
- **Punctual:** Arrive at your venue an hour before the meeting begins (e.g. 8:00 for a 9:00 start). This time is important to meet with the team, pray and set up together. If you are late it impacts the whole team, the starting time and in turn the children too. This is unfair and easily avoidable.
- **Presentable:** Wearing your Children's Church shirt helps you be identifiable to the parents and the children. Ladies, do not wear a skirt as it limits your activities with children. Wear shoes to run and play in.
- **Pray:** Pray in the week for your children and team. Pray as a team on arrival before the children arrive. Hear what God is pressing on your heart and give Him reign over the morning.
- **Purpose:** Know your role for that meeting. Are you the MC, leading the memory verse or running the game? Know your role and be prepared for it. Remember to make every moment you have with the children count.
- **Pack:** When most of the children have left, begin packing up, depending on your venue. Don't just leave and expect the rest of the team to pack. Team effort. Share your thoughts on the lesson and reflect on how to improve.

- **Preparing the venue**

- Decorate your venue, making the welcoming area as attractive as possible (colour, theme, music, change it). A boring entrance suggests a boring event. Parents will want to encourage their children to attend when they see it looks safe, fun and accommodating.
- Similarly, display safety. There should be leaders welcoming, some with the children playing, some roaming around keeping an eye on things, and some serving. It shows organisation and structure, implying safety.
- Have activities and games set out as the children arrive. This helps them quickly feel at ease, assists leaders in building relationships with the children and can be used as an intentional lesson time through fun. Make it exciting by introducing new activities each week.
- Music playing can help set the atmosphere and create a vibe. Often you will find children singing along to worship songs as they participate in the arrival activities.



Our preparation should present this irresistible Gospel in such a way that children move away from depending on us towards their own personal and intimate relationship with Jesus.

6) TEACHING

6.1) MC

Someone on the team needs to take on the MC role for the meeting. It is good to give as many people as possible opportunity in all areas, but the truth is that some people are not confident to MC and therefore shouldn't be asked to. Here is what the MC needs to do:

- Calm the children and get's them ready to listen to the lesson.
- Welcomes the children. Part of this can include welcoming new children, celebrating birthdays, or sharing any news.
- Introduce the lesson, whether it be a skit, object lesson and story and then summarise what has been said after. Taking care to not talk too long.
- Keep the flow of the meeting running smoothly to avoid children losing attention or needing discipline.
- Most importantly, follow God's prompting and lead the lesson where He wants it to go.

Which MC would you want to listen to?



Most people are capable of playing the role of MC but children respond best to certain characteristics such as a loud clear voice that can easily be heard and used to control the group. Children relate well to and are more likely to follow the guidance of someone who is friendly and full of life.

6.2) STORYTELLING

The Bible is filled with stories! There are parables, testimonies, prophecies, the life of Jesus and so much more that we need to be teaching our children.

Benefits of storytelling include:

- Storytelling is fun, interactive, entertaining and an amazing way to keep children's attention as you teach them important lessons.
- Children learn well when they hear, see and participate. Storytelling is an excellent opportunity to do all of these.
- Storytelling is a wonderful way to give personal testimony of what God has done in your own life.
- Storytelling helps bring the truths of the Bible to life.

Things to take note of when choosing a story:

- Stories and lessons from the Bible are most valuable. Make sure to read it directly from the Bible before you prepare to assure accuracy.
- Stories from present day that help teach lessons from the Bible can also be useful as well as personal testimonies.
- "Modern day parables" can be used occasionally but must be taught alongside a Bible verse.
- Take care that content is age appropriate and does not upset the child.

Preparation is key! Ask yourself the following questions:



Am I ready?

Practice and know your story well. Avoid simply reading it. Remember all eyes are on you so checking your phone or notes are part of the lesson and can be very distracting.



Do I have everything I need?

Always have your Bible with you. Pictures, props, dress-up outfits, words with the main idea, verses from the Bible, puppets all help hold the child's attention and improve learning.



What could go wrong?

Select children volunteers carefully to avoid disruption. Have rules set in place before you start so that children know what is expected of them.



How will I assess if the child learnt the main idea?

Your story should have one main idea, possibly more for older children. The repetition of this idea will increase the chance of it being learnt. Crafts, review questions, games and all the other activities done that day should also teach and assess this same main idea.

How to bring a story to life:

- **Use descriptive language**

Try to create a picture inside of the listener's imagination, you want them to know how the character is feeling and what their surroundings are like as if they are there experiencing it with them.

- **Use your voice**

Take care not to rush your story. Speak loud and clear. Change your tone; whisper, shout, talk slowly or fast. Silence can create suspense and pause for thought. Use a different voice for each character to help the children follow who is talking.

- **Use visual aids**

Drawing pictures as you tell the story or using ones prepared beforehand are extremely useful. They help the child follow what is happening and increase retention. These can also be used for the child to retell the story either at the end of the class or to family and friends. There are many visual aids and clips online that can be used.

It is also beneficial to have the main idea or the Bible verse written out so you can refer to it during the story.



- **Use dress up/costumes**

Children need to know that you are in character: a simple hat, crown, wig, cloth or cloak changes their leader into a queen, prophet, shepherd etc.

- **Use props**

Props that add to the story and assist in teaching the main idea should be used. E.g. pebble for David and Goliath; a dagger for David cutting Saul's cloak; the last jar of flour and oil for Elijah and widow.



Different ways to present a story:

- **Story Board**

Pictures are drawn or added to a background as you tell the story.

- **Volunteers**

Children love to participate. Dress up some volunteers and get them to act out certain actions and repeat certain sentences as you tell the story.

- **Puppets**

There are many variations to using puppets - from finger puppets to puppet theatre. Puppets can hold a child's attention for a long time and they love to teach, correct and interact with the puppet as the story is told.

- **Act out**

One option is for leaders to dress up and act out the story like a play. Another is for the leader to become the character who then tells their story. E.g. Queen Esther gives an account of her story.

- **Different point of view**

Become the pig in the pig sty that tells the story of the prodigal son who visited before going back to his dad. Look for unusual ways to teach common stories.

- **Child participation**

Repetition is great for helping children remember the point of the story as well as keeping their attention for longer. One option is the leader can have a certain phrase or Bible verse that the children need to complete... e.g. for Esther, the leader says "*You have been called...*" ... children reply "*for such a time as this*" or e.g. for David, the leader says ... "*I want a heart*" ... children say, "*that beats for God*".

Children can participate by adding sound effects or actions when a certain word is said ... and the *wind blew* and the *waves crashed*.

Another way is for them to make the craft beforehand and use it to participate in the story.



6.3) MEMORY VERSES

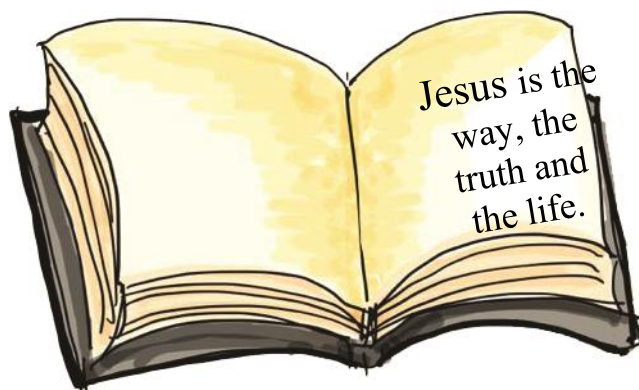
The word of God is so important for children and adults to read and learn.

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24-27)

Benefits of teaching memory verses include:

Knowing the word of God equips children to:

- Know the God of the Bible.
- Live a life which honours God.
- Resist temptation.
- Teach others the gospel and encourage them.
- Encourage themselves in times of trouble.
- Build up a hunger for more of God’s word.



Things to consider when teaching a memory verse:

- *Use the Bible*

Reading directly from the Bible helps children see that this is not your opinion but rather God’s truthful message to them. Spend time teaching children how to look up verses so that they are able to read it for themselves. Use a translation that is appropriate for the children (e.g. NLT or ERV), in terms of language and complexity. Always make sure that you give them the context of the verse.

- *Convey understanding*

The ultimate goal is for a child to know **and** understand scripture being taught so that they will be able to draw on it as they need in their lives. This means that we need to explain verses in simple language that they can understand and apply it to circumstances they can relate to.

However, it is still important to teach children verses that they might not fully grasp until a later stage. God’s word needs to be hidden in our heart and He will give us revelation of its meaning when the time comes.

- *Make it fun*

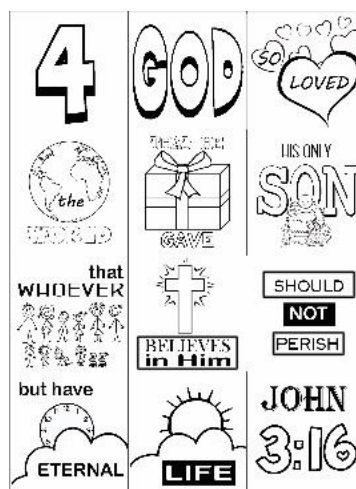
Repetition is essential in assisting a child to learn a memory verse, however merely repeating it ten times may hinder their love for the word. There are many simple ways to make learning scripture fun. These include changing the volume of your voice, taking turns who says the memory verse or even simply changing where you stand in the room. Where possible get parents to reinforce verses taught during the week.

A few ideas to teach memory verses:

Consider the age, interests, understanding and abilities when choosing one of the following.



For the word of God is alive and powerful.
Hebrews 4:12



- Use a picture to represent each word in your memory verse.
- Repeat the memory verse with the children a few times. Tell them that when they hear you read a specific word/phrase they are to repeat the memory verse. Then read a story from the Bible, prompting the children to repeat the memory verse at the appropriate time.
- Sing existing or made-up songs.
- Have a puppet or skit with two teachers in which the puppet or one teacher does not know the memory verse and needs the children to help them learn it.
- Make up actions to go with each word of the memory verse. Once they have practiced a few times, get the children to say the memory verse with the words alone then with the actions alone.
- Play a game- such as musical chairs in which the children go around the chairs while saying the memory verse then you say stop and they have to find a chair or tossing a ball around while music plays in the background and asking everyone with a ball in their hand to say the memory verse, or chasing games where each person caught has to say the memory verse
- Write the memory verse on a piece of paper/ cardboard. Cut it up into different pieces that fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. Hide the pieces in the classroom or give one to each child and allow them time to fit the words together.
- Write out the memory verse on a board or piece of paper and get the children to repeat it a few times. Then start covering / wiping away a few words at a time and each time have the children repeat the memory verse until no words remain.
- Cut out each word or phrase of a memory verse and put them in scrambled order and ask the children to assemble it correctly.

6.4) OBJECT LESSONS

An object lesson uses everyday objects or experiences to teach the main idea of the lesson. Many times in the Bible, we see Jesus use objects and experiences people can relate to in order to explain otherwise complex concepts. Jesus spoke about the vine and branches (John 15:5), salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16), hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) and there are many other examples.

In Children's Ministry object lessons can be an extremely useful tool, especially if chosen and presented correctly.



Benefits of object lessons include:

- *Gets their attention*

The more senses you appeal to the easier you will keep their attention and the better they will learn and retain information. Using objects means they are not just listening but can see, feel and possibly even smell the object. Merely arriving with the object will pique their interest.

- *Understand*

Object lessons are valuable in making complex lessons easy to understand as they visually picture and understand an idea that would be difficult to grasp otherwise.

- *Remember*

Seeing the object again, even out of context, will serve as a reminder of the main idea of your lesson.

- *Teach*

Children love to recreate the object lesson and this can be useful in providing them with opportunities to practice teaching others the Biblical lessons.

Things to take note when choosing and presenting object lessons:

- *Emphasize the main idea:*

It is **essential** that the object lesson teaches the children the main idea of the lesson. The most well thought out, entertaining and well executed object lesson is an absolute failure if the children have walked away without grasping what you are trying to teach them.

- *Common Objects versus new experiences:*

Choosing objects that the children come into contact with regularly and that they can relate to can increase a child's understanding. At the same time children love new experiences such as science experiments, nothing like gooey bubbling solution to get a point across and remembered.

Warning: Never tell children it is magic, be honest and tell them how amazing God is, the creator of science.

- *Relevant:*

Consider the age, family life, experiences etc. of the children. Young children struggle with abstract concepts so keep comparisons simple.

- *Fun & Chaos:*

Do not be scared to choose an object lesson that will cause a bit of **organised** chaos. Often the way-out lessons like squashing a banana on your head or licking your shoe will be remembered long after – bet you are even intrigued **BUT** make sure it teaches the main idea!

Preparation is key! Ask yourself the following questions:



Am I ready?

Make sure you have practiced what you are going to say and have actually performed each step of the object lesson.



Do I have everything I need?

Have everything you need to present the object lesson close at hand. It is also important to have a clean-up strategy ready, so you can quickly move on to the rest of the lesson.



What could go wrong?

Prepare how to prevent it from happening or how to use it to your advantage. If this goes wrong I will...



How will I assess if the child learnt the main idea?

Answering questions, re-teaching the object lesson, linking it to your Bible story or simply explaining what they learnt are some of the ways you can make sure the object lesson was beneficial.

6.5) WORSHIP

The environment provided needs to be safe and assist in nurturing the hearts of our children as they grow in their worship. We need to be instilling a passion to lead a life of worship not just a worship session.

Benefits of including worship as part of children's ministry.

- We worship to provide children with the opportunity to express their love, adoration, thankfulness and praise to the Lord because that is what He desires and more importantly deserves. We worship to honour God.

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom. (Psalm 145:3)

- We worship so that others may know how great God is.

Sing to the LORD, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. (Psalm 12:5)

Things to consider when leading worship:

- *Expression of worship*

Children generally express themselves very differently to adults. An adult's response to something exciting would commonly be limited to facial expressions and words of excitement ... "Yay, we are going for ice cream!" A child's response involves their entire body as they bounce up and down, throw their arms up, hug you and then run and shout to everyone that they are going for ice cream.

When it comes to worshipping Jesus we don't want to be conforming a child's natural means of expression to how an adult would worship. We want to provide children the freedom to worship Jesus in their way. For most children this will mean large movements, songs of declaration and shouts of joy but at the same time we need to be sensitive to those who do not.

- *Worship cannot be forced*

We **can** teach from the Bible why we worship. We **can** demonstrate worship through our own worship. We **can** encourage them to worship by providing a secure environment for them to freely express themselves. We **can** provide opportunities for them to worship. BUT WE **CANNOT FORCE WORSHIP!** Worship has to be from the heart. It is not simply regurgitating words and performing fun actions. It is between the person and God. It is valuable to spend time instilling this into our children to avoid them being caught up in the mere "fun" of worship.

- *Song selection*

The child's age, abilities as well as the way they express themselves should all be considered when selecting a song. There are so many genres available for children's ministry so try a variety to see which best leads the children into a place of

worship. Songs with easy words, concepts and lots of repetition are easy for them to learn and understand which allows them worship at home.

- *Lyrics*

Songs have a variety of purposes and benefits:

- Teach the Word, both lessons and verses.
- Declare the word.
- Worship.

- *Actions and Dance moves*

General tips include:

- Choose larger movements that help them express what they are singing.
- Keep dance moves recent but appropriate.
- Actions should assist with worship and not distract them. Simple moves with lots of repetition are most effective.



Preparation is key! Ask yourself the following questions:



Am I ready?

You are ready once you are able to sing the lyrics and do the actions without having to think what is next but can completely focus on Jesus. Worshiping is the best way to lead worship.



Do I have everything I need?

Have all the equipment, playlists, visual aids etc set up before the children arrive. Be flexible to remove or add a song as the Spirit leads.



What could go wrong?

Children should know beforehand what is expected of them during worship time. Even if they do not want to participate they need to stand and behave in a manner that does not distract anyone else from doing so. A child should only be removed if they are causing serious disruption to the rest of the group, and it should be handled with love and patience.

5.6) CRAFTS

Every minute we have with the children is precious and should be as purposeful as possible and this should apply even to our craft sessions.

Although colour pages and colour activities are simple and easy to prepare and can even be done by the smallest of children, there are so many other creative options available. Some children love to colour, others cut, others build and create so by varying the types of crafts presented you also help accommodate all the children in your class.

Free yourself of the idea that the final product has to be as perfect as the sample you made. The process can be just as valuable and to a child their scribble makes perfect sense. Remember the aim is for the child to leave knowing the main idea presented in the lesson and this can be done in the process or the final product and sometimes even both.

Benefits of crafts include:

- *Recap lesson*

Crafts are a wonderful way to recap what has been taught. As the children make their craft walk around the classroom making relevant comments, asking questions and highlighting important parts of the lesson.

- *Make learning fun and easy*

Crafts such as game cards, finger puppets, quack quacks, flags etc. can help make learning fun and therefore much easier for children.

- *Teaching tool*

Teachers can use the craft as a teaching aid and then the children can make their own set to help teach their family and friends.

- *Crafts assist parent-child conversations.*

It is important to never forget that we are teaming up with the parents. Crafts are a good starting point for conversations about what they have learnt and hopefully give the parents an opportunity to build on it throughout the week. Children should be encouraged to use their crafts to “teach” their families, especially those who do not attend church.

- *Serve as a reminder*

By simply seeing the craft lying around the house it will give the child a quick flashback of the lesson or at least remind them of the main idea.

Things to consider when choosing a craft:

- Will this craft best meet the benefits listed above? Crafts that take a lot of preparation on the teacher's part can be well worth it if they reinforce the ideas taught.
- Consider the specific children you are teaching, such as their age, abilities, likes and interests. Difficult crafts may cause more frustration than benefit.
- Crafts do not have to be expensive. Look for ways to adapt ideas and use recycled material.
- The space available, number of children and leaders available to assist should also play a role.
- Look for ways to include the Bible verse or caption that can reinforce the lesson.
- Crafts should be fun and not like a school task. Craft time should not take up the time or detract from the main idea taught.



Preparation is key! Ask yourself the following questions:



Am I ready?

Practicing the craft yourself, making check lists, and setting up before children arrive are valuable. Always prepare a few more than you will need.



Do I have everything I need?

Continuously collect scrap materials such as bottle tops, jars, toilet rolls etc. so they are available when needed. Buckets with soapy water, paper towels, plastic packets may be needed for clean-up.



What could go wrong?

Prepare how to prevent it from happening or how to fix it when it does. Tape, staplers, glue, Prestick are excellent to have on hand for accidental rips or spoiled work.



How will I assess if the child learnt the main idea?

Intentional questions and comments are **very important!** They can reteach the entire lesson and help clear up confusion.

6.7) GAMES

Creating new or adapting well loved games can serve as a valuable teaching tool in children's ministry.



Benefits of games include:

- Children enjoy games and so will want to be involved. Involvement means an opportunity for learning.
- Games can be used for outreach purposes. E.g. inviting children to a games day.
- Games make it possible for lots of repetition of main points or Bible verses while still being fun and interesting.
- Games can build relationships with leaders and each other, which is an important part of church and community.
- Some children find it difficult leaving their parents and games can assist with this.
- Valuable life lessons can be taught during games such as sportsmanship, patience, resist cheating, perseverance etc.

Things to consider when choosing a game:

- Games should have a purpose as mentioned above.
- Instructions should be easy to follow. Consider the specific children that will be playing the game, such as their age, understanding, abilities, likes and interests. Difficult games can be frustrating rather than fun.
- Think about the size of the area, the number of children and how many leaders you have to assist you.
- Be wise in your use of competition and rewards. The main aim of the game is not about finding a winner or gaining a prize.
- Child safety is vital. Children should know what is expected of them.

Preparation is key! Ask yourself the following questions:



Am I ready?

Everything must be set up and ready before the children arrive. The play area should be cordoned off. Have a plan of how to split teams.



Do I have everything I need?

All game equipment and a whistle should be readily available.



What could go wrong?

Do not leave equipment, or water, lying around. These can create discipline problems and more importantly are a safety hazard. A first aid kit should always be on hand.

7) CARING FOR OUR CHILDREN

When parents bring their children to Children's Church, one of the things they will check for immediately is the safety of the venue and set up. If you are not prepared to offer a safe and secure meeting, parents will feel reluctant to leave their children with you. For many people, they are entrusting their children to strangers. It is vital for Children's Church to display that it is safe, organised and fun. Here are some points how to be safe and offer security:

Know your children

- All parents must fill out an indemnity form as well sign a medical release and disclaimer not holding the church liable for any accidents. This must be filed and kept for reference if needed.
- Children should wear name tags. Knowing a child's name helps build relationships and assists in discipline.
- For quick reference, the name tag should also have the child's emergency contact details and any essential information such as serious allergies.

First Aid

There must be a First Aid kit available on site that is regularly maintained. All leaders must know where it is. It is a great benefit to have someone on your team who has completed a First Aid course, who can be called upon for any incidents.



No leader may administer any medicine whatsoever e.g. Panado, sugar water, EpiPen. It is not permitted legally for many reasons. In emergencies contact parents immediately for their assistance.

Venue and Equipment



Before each meeting, ensure that your venue is safe for children. Check for anything broken that can be harmful or objects lying around that can be hazardous.

Be aware of equipment that you use and the ability of children to use it too. For example, don't leave little children with glue and scissors. Be aware of small objects that children could desire to put in their mouth.

The same applies to some games that could turn more aggressive. Be aware of that possibility and ready to change the rules if needed.



Discipline

- Aim to avoid circumstances that may result in the need for discipline.
 - Set rules and regulations and follow a basic routine so that children know what is expected of them.
 - Children respond well to positive reinforcement and are more likely to comply when you have a respected relationship with them.
 - Well-prepared lessons and activities which keep the children involved paired with times for them to cool down all assist in avoiding issues.
 - While a leader is busy teaching the other leaders in the class should help control the children. A simple hand on the shoulder or a whisper to be quiet and refocus can be beneficial.
- Remember techniques will differentiate between each child and the situation. Always consider why the child is acting out, it could be a reaction to another child, mismanagement of your lesson or something related to their personal life. The following is a simple guideline to managing a disruptive child:
 - Reinforce the instruction and behavior expected.
 - Explain the consequences if the behavior continues.
 - Using the child's name and bringing them close can help calm them. Always make them face you and not the class otherwise they have an audience to perform for or could feel humiliated. If another leader is in the class with you often them simply making their presence known by sitting next to the disruptive child can help them settle.
 - If the child is still disruptive and it begins to negatively impact the others first separate them from the group or remove them from the class if needed but make sure they have supervision at all times and are in view of other leaders.
 - The worst scenario requires the child to be returned to their parents. You need to explain to the parents all the measures you took to correct the child's behaviour. Ask the parents after the meeting for any techniques they use that can help with their child. You do need to welcome that child again the next week but inform the parents and child that if they don't change in behaviour then they will be returned to the parents again.
- What **NOT** to do:
 - You may never physically harm a child as a form of discipline. Do not shout at a child, emotionally harm them or use humour/sarcasm to challenge them. These methods hurt a child in many ways and can cause more fear and a lack of trust in a leader.
 - Do not send a child outside by themselves. If they are very disruptive and need to step outside the class, they need to have a leader sit with them but within sight of other leaders.
 - Scripture asks us not to keep a record of wrongs, so don't create a stigma over certain children that they will always be difficult to manage. They may surprise you.



Buddy System

It is important that a leader does not find themselves alone with a child, out of sight. Due to the many sad incidents of child abuse in various forms that occur, if a leader is accused of abusing a child while alone with that child, there would be little means to help that leader, even if they are innocent. So for the protection of the leader, and for the sake of establishing a safe system, never be alone with a child in private. If a child needs the bathroom, let a group go together, or two leaders accompany a child.

If a child desires to speak privately, that can happen but within view of other leaders who can still observe you.

Ask another leader to accompany you if you need to help a child out of the group for whatever reason.

Without overthinking this, be cautious regarding any physical contact with a child. This includes hugging, picking up children, allowing them to sit in your lap or similar. Simply be aware that some children don't enjoy this contact and to negotiate this with some and not others can be tricky. Use discretion but ultimately aim to protect yourself from any accusations and the child from being uncomfortable.

With this precaution in mind, you **may not** contact children via social media or mobile contact in whatever form.

