

The Centrality of Children's Ministry in the Church



Introduction

“We must think through an issue theologically, because our ministry is a reflection of our theology.”

Susan Hunt

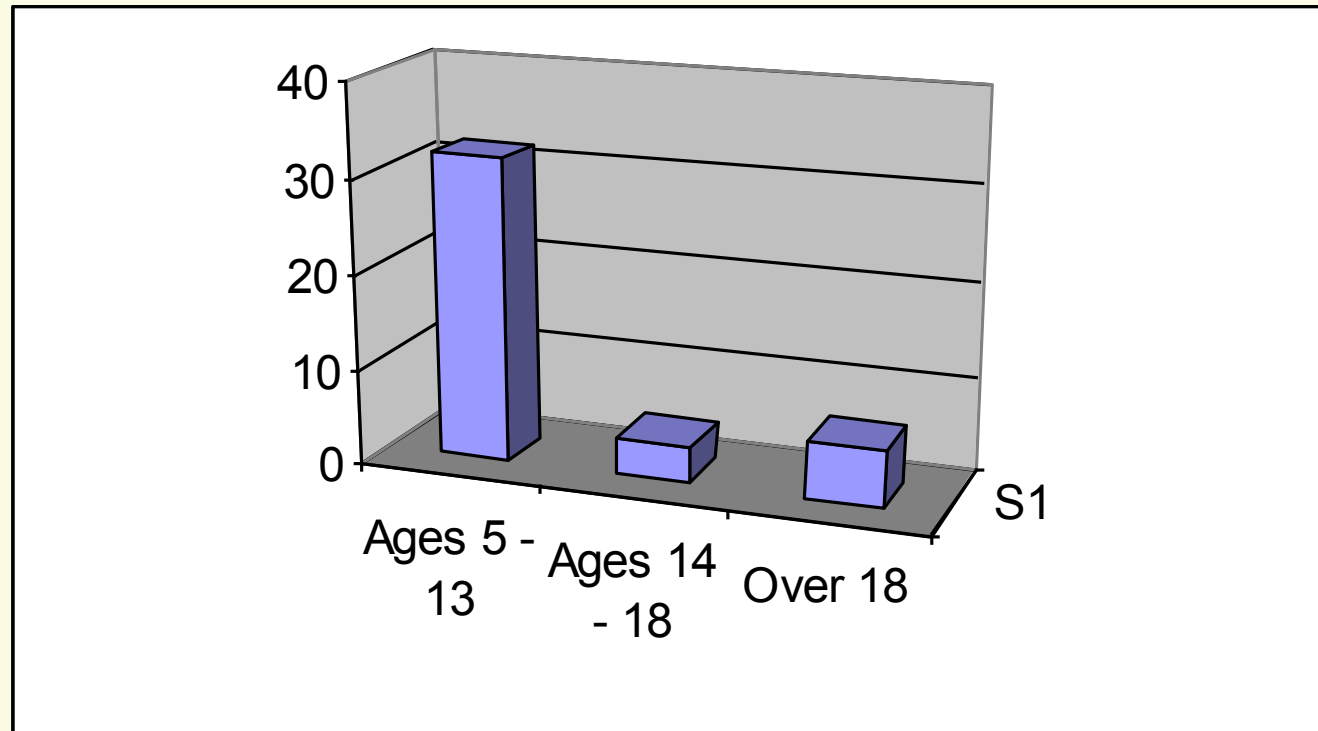
Introduction

- I. Why do we minister to children?
- II. What is the role of children in the Bible?
- III. What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?
- IV. Conclusion - So why do we minister to children?

Why Minister to Children?

Perspective on Children

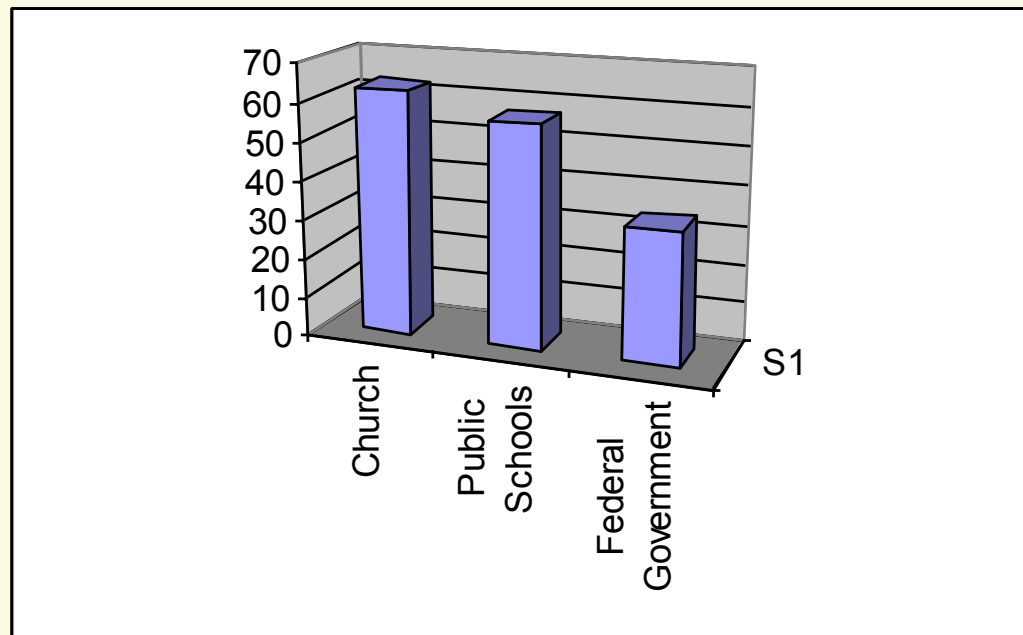
— Probability of Accepting Christ by Age



Why Minister to Children?

Perspective of Parents

Who parents think should take on an increased role in parenting their children:



Why Minister to Children?

Perspective of Research

Growing churches have a vibrant children's ministry

What Really Matters?

... three items that are the highest priority for church shoppers are friendliness to visitors, involvement in serving the poor and disadvantaged, and the *quality of programs and classes for children*. Roughly 45% of adult church-goers identified each of these elements as "extremely important."

Barna Research

Why Minister to Children?



Perspective of Visitors

Dear Staff,

My family and I have visited The Kirk the several Sundays. We have felt such a warm, friendly welcome from both members and staff that is unmatched by other churches we have visited.

The best part is that our triplet toddlers, who have never been happy in a nursery, would rather stay and play that come with their parents. What a great feeling that although they can't verbally express it, they feel happy and loved.

Thank you all for embracing even the smallest of visitors.

In His Word,

Amy K.

Why Minister to Children?

Perspective of Pastors


After the observation and experience of a long life, I have come decisively to the conclusion, that, if I had my life to live over again, I would pay ten times as much attention to the children of my charge, as I ever did when I had a pastoral charge. If I were now about to undertake the care of a new or feeble church, I should consider special attention to the children and young people of the neighborhood as one of the most certain and effectual methods of collecting and strengthening a large flock that, humanly speaking, could possibly be employed.

Samuel Miller 1860's

Why Minister to Children?

When I preach, I regard neither doctors nor magistrates, of whom I have above forty in my congregation. My eyes are on the servant maids and the children.

Martin Luther 1500's

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Why does your church minister to children?

But...

What is the Biblical perspective?

Why Minister to Children?

Children are an integral part of the covenantal community and are therefore entitled to the rights and privileges of the church - in this case - covenantal education, as well as the responsibilities of the church. They are not simply an 'add-on' or the 'future' church.

Why Minister to Children?

2. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion;[b] **and of their children**:[c] and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,[d] the house and family of God,[e] out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.[f]

3. Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.[g]

Westminster Confession of Faith, XXV

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

- In Genesis 1:28 we read that *"God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number...""*

Gen 17:6-7

7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

Gen 17:9-14

Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner-- those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

(NIV)

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

Gen 18:17-19

17 Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?

18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.

19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

(NIV)

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

Exod 12:24-27

24 "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.

25 When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony.

26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'

27 then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Then the people bowed down and worshiped.

(NIV)

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 we read "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*"

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

In Deuteronomy 31:12-13 we read,
"Assemble the people -- men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns -- so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

Ps 78:1-8

O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old-- what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers-- a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

In Jeremiah 32:38-41 we read, *"They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul."*

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

Luke 18:15-17

15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.

16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."
(NIV)

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

Acts 2:38-39

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call."

(NIV)

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

Eph 6:1-3

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 "Honor your father and mother"-- which is the first commandment with a promise--

3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."


(NIV)

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

In 2 Timothy 3:14-17 we read, *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

What is the Biblical perspective of children?

Children are an integral part of the covenantal community and are therefore entitled to the rights and privileges of the church - in this case - covenantal education, as well as the responsibilities of the church. They are not simply an 'add-on' or the 'future' church.


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*How does the leadership view the role of
children at your church?*

What is Covenantal Education?

Covenant Education can be defined as education that enables the recipients to see all of life from the perspective of our relationship to God through Christ and that leads us to behave according to the rules of our relationship with Him.

Dr. Allen Curry

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What are the implications of this view to children's ministry in the local church?

What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?

The ministry of Christian education affords more people the opportunity to learn to exercise their gifts and serve others in the context of biblical ministry. The vast number of tasks that must be done in the areas of teaching and organization in any Christian education program involves many people. These people are engaged in Christian service.

Christian education also provides the most effective means for preserving people's relationships with the church. The Search Institute did a major study on what was the most important variable in churches where people continued in the church from childhood through adulthood. To no one's surprise, the answer was Christian education.

Dr. Allen Curry₂₉

What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?

Implications of theology

1. Intentional application of theology in children's ministry

📖 **The covenantal community is Relational:** The God of heaven and earth is a personal God who enters into an intimate relationship with us. Our relationships with each other are to mirror His relationship with us. This is not a relational model built on sentimentalism and felt-needs theology. It is a relational model built on the covenant of grace. There is a huge difference.

📖 **The covenantal community is corporate:** Salvation is personal, but God does not just deal with us as individuals. God deals with us as His children. We are a family and there should be a deep oneness that reflects the unity of the Trinity. Our children should be enfolded into this household of faith, taught to cultivate a sense of community among themselves, and taught to relate to and love the entire church family.

What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?

📄 **The covenantal community is generational:** Throughout Scripture there is the emphasis that one generation is to tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord and the wonders He has done. There are repeated commands to teach and nurture the children. Many of our teaching times and activities are age-specific, but we must be intentional in giving opportunities for children to learn from and serve people in all seasons and circumstances of life so that we tradition the faith from one generation to the next.

📄 **The covenantal community is compassionate:** An essential part of a Biblical approach to children's ministry will be opportunities for children to be involved in ministries of compassion. We must teach them the *why* and *how* of compassion because this is the way of life of the covenantal community.

What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?

📄 **The covenantal community is inclusive:** We are commissioned to "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). A covenantal ministry will be outward focused and it will teach children to love, pray for, and witness to those outside the covenantal community. The covenantal community will be a welcoming community.

What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?

📄 **The covenantal community is integrative:** The promise of God is the thread that holds Scripture together. This gives an all-encompassing worldview, an integrated framework to think about God's truth and to apply that truth into all of life. We must guard against moralism that aims for behavioral change apart from grace. This integrative principle means that the children's ministry does not stand alone it is part of the total ministry of the church. The purpose of the children's ministry should flow from the purpose statement of the church. Then the over-arching purpose of the children's ministry should govern the development of each program in the ministry.

What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?

📄 **The covenantal community is familial:** We must equip people to think Biblically about the family/church relationship. Scripture does not present an isolationist, individualistic view of the family. Each nuclear family unit makes up the household of faith, the covenantal community. We must teach the interdependence of home and church. Community solidarity strengthens and protects each individual family and equips families to build homes that are little sanctuaries of grace.

📄 **The covenantal community is exclusive:** "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God..." (Exodus 20:3-5). Neither we nor our children can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). We must be vigilant in guarding our children against the cultural idols of our day.

What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?

2. Intentional Strategy of Christian Education

☞ A fine-tuned educational program can reinforce the pulpit ministry of the church.

☞ A coordinated program can give greater assurance that a church is proclaiming the whole will of God and is thus “innocent of the blood of all men”.

☞ Curriculum materials can be carefully evaluated for theological consistency and pedagogical excellence.

☞ Care can be given to integrating the educational program with the entire ministry-philosophy and ministry-map of the church.

What are some tangible benefits to the church by ministering with children?

Teachers can be enlisted, trained, and encouraged.


Each teacher can concentrate on his or her particular slice of the educational pie if he or she has a clear picture of the overarching Christian education plan and the particular purpose of the program each is working in.

Community can be cultivated within each class.

Community can be intentionally cultivated between age-groups.

People can be trained and mobilized for mercy ministries.

(Susan Hunt)

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What are some of the tangible benefits of ministry to/with children in your local church? How can you increase the ministry of/with children in your local church?


Conclusion - So why do we minister to children?


Children are an integral part of the covenantal community and are therefore entitled to the rights and privileges of the church - in this case - covenantal education, as well as the responsibilities of the church. They are not simply an 'add-on' or the 'future' church.

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What is their responsibility?


What is their responsibility?

 “What is missional?” To be a missional church is to be a church where the members understand that their own neighborhoods are mission fields, that they themselves are missionaries who seek to engage their neighbors in relationships so that in time the Gospel may be presented and received. It is providing to those around us a ‘cup of cold water’ in the name of Jesus.

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*“We must think through an issue theologically,
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Does the ministry to children at your church reflect your theology?

