

Lesson #4: Children's Ministry works best when guided by the church leaders.

Here are four, big reasons why your children's ministry should be under the direct and regular guidance of your church leaders:

Reason #1: Because your church leaders are specially gifted and responsible before God for the teaching that takes place in the church—even to the children.

Reason #2: Because children are being raised by the adults under their pastoral care and raising children is an important part of God's calling on their lives.

Reason #3: Because children's ministry often involves a high percentage of your church membership, and your church leaders are responsible to make sure that those members are receiving the care they themselves need, even as they are serving the children.

And Reason #4: if your church leaders don't provide leadership, someone else will, and too many times this leads to pockets of friction, division and sometimes poor teaching.

What does direct and regular guidance look like? Here are some ideas:

- The leaders decide upon (or review and approve suggestions from the children's ministry team) teaching themes and resources used with the children at church.
- The leaders set guidelines for who can volunteer in children's ministry and how frequently they can serve to make sure that no one is over-serving and thereby under-feeding their own souls.
- The leaders approve any major program changes, making sure that the church is not becoming too program-centered and thereby starving families of time together.
- One church leader is given particular oversight of the children's ministry team, having regular meetings with them, praying with them, receiving updates on children, parents, teachers, resources and programs. He is the point person to talk with teachers, parents or the children's ministry team as situations in children's ministry arise. He keeps any other pastors updated with children's ministry issues.
- The leaders decide upon important issues, such as the baptism and church membership for children/youth and putting their decisions in writing and making them available to parents, teachers and the children's ministry team.

At CHBC, we enjoy the guidance of our elders in all of these ways. Here's what it looks like for us:

The elders have given us four teaching emphases:

1. Chronological study of the Bible (OT/NT overviews)
2. Prepare the children to gather together with the church body
3. God's One Big Plan of Redemption/Missions
4. Biblical Theology

They have set guidelines for members wanting to serve in children's ministry that they think will provide enough continuity for the children being taught, while also being sensitive to ensuring that the volunteers, themselves, are in a position of being taken good care of, spiritually. These guidelines are spelled out in Appendix B.

One elder in particular--the pastor of families--is the overseer of our children's ministry team. He meets regularly with the team, giving them advice and receiving updates on the children, parents, programs, etc. They pray for the families. He reports to the elders at elders' meetings any information of note; or, brings up any issues that they need to discuss and decide upon. He reports back to the children's ministry team and helps them implement the elders' decisions. He also gives a children's ministry report to the congregation at Members' Meetings, held every two months.

Our elders' have written up their wisdom on the baptism of children at CHBC and give it out to all parents who are seeking membership at CHBC. They do this because not everyone has come to the same conclusion as them

and they want to be up-front with their conclusions, in case a family would rather go to a church with a different view on this matter.

(Our elders' paper on the baptism of children at CHBC can be found in Appendix C.)

Lesson #4: Questions for You in Your Ministry Setting:

1. How would you describe the current guidance/oversight your children's ministry team receives from your church leaders? What do you appreciate about this? Is there anything else you would like to see them do?
2. What would be hard about receiving more spiritual oversight from the church leaders? Are there areas of individualism among the children's ministry program that either does not receive enough oversight from the church leaders? How does this show? What changes could be made?
3. What issues, such as baptism of children, would you like to see your church leaders give your team spiritual guidance upon?
4. Who decides upon the teaching emphases, the curriculum and the programs that children's ministry implements?
5. Do you have a statement of faith that provides a foundation for the truths you believe and teach? If not, what are the Biblical truths that under-gird your ministry?
6. Do you have a mission statement for what you hope to do within this ministry? If not, what would it be?
7. Do you have guidelines for who or how often someone can serve in children's ministry? Do you have a few members who over-serve?
8. Who takes care of difficult, pastoral issues that arise with children or with parents?