

Lesson #9: Practice finiteness. Start with less and do it well.

It's easy to want to provide a ton of programs for children. These programs are often seen as a drawing card for new families. If the kids are happy, the parents will stay at your church. But, I would caution you to start small and do that well. Don't just think of the programs that children enjoy or that parents might expect. Think of feeding the whole church well. Each one of those programs takes volunteers. The more programs, the more volunteers... or the more hours from the same volunteers. Those volunteers have their own spiritual needs and their own life obligations. You want to make sure that you aren't building a church of spiritually "fat" kids, but "starving" adults. This is why it is wise to have the church leaders make decisions about what children's programs the church will provide. Inform the leaders of the practical information they will need about volunteers needed, and what kind of commitment is expected in order for them to be able to truly decide what is healthy for the church.

This is especially hard in small church/church planting situations. I know of one pastor's wife, when their church was very small, led the only children's class there was. To make the situation even more complicated, this class took place during the church service. Other volunteers were few and far between. Needless to say, she started melting down. So, as hard as it was, this church decided to practice finiteness. They prayed for more volunteers, kept making the need known. But as they waited for the volunteer pool to grow, they chose to cut back the classes from weekly to every other week. This was as much as this woman could manage. Interestingly enough, more volunteers eventually did step forward and the class was once more offered weekly. This was a great decision!

That being said, what you do (and however often you do it), do it well! And this is certainly easier to do, if you when you aren't spread so thin! More on doing a good job to follow....

Lesson #9: Questions for You in Your Ministry Setting:

1. What programs does your church/ministry setting have for children?
2. When are these programs offered?
3. For what ages of children are they offered?
4. How would you prioritize your programs? Why?
5. What group of parents/children do you think are most vulnerable to not being well fed spiritually? What could you/what do you do to help support them, especially?
6. Do you have a hard time getting volunteers for all your programs or certain programs? Why?
7. Why might it actually be spiritually healthier if your church does not offer every program that parents might want or children might enjoy?
8. Why might it be better for families to leave nights free rather than offer another program?
9. How can we help support families, even if they are not at a program at church?
10. How do you care for the volunteers who care for your children, making sure they are not over-serving?