

Lesson #3: Know Your "Critters."

A "critter", in case you didn't know, is just a down-home, backwoods, slang word for creature. The point of this lesson is that you first need to know WHO you are supporting and teaching, if you are going to know HOW to best support and teach them.

The two types of "critters" you most want to know are your parents and their children. Here are some types of things it might be helpful to know about them:

Parents:

- Are they type "A" driven or laid back?
- Are they spiritually mature or just baby Christians?
- Do they come from a Christian background or other?
- Do they have very little disposable income or are they able to afford extras (like biblical resources to use with their children)?
- Is English their first or second language?
- Are they single-parents or are they married? Do they both work outside the home?
- Are they very involved in church or sporadic attenders?
- Do they like to communicate by email, phone or in person?
- Do they tend to use the take-home resources you give out or not?
- Do they have a transient occupation (student, military, etc) or one that allows them to settle more permanently in one place?
- Do they have much family support in the area or are they on their own?
- How do they educate their children: home-school, private, public school?

Answers to questions like these can help you better understand how to support parents and their children. For example, parents who are spiritually mature themselves will probably have a naturally easier time in teaching truths to their children. A young Christian or one from a non-Christian background might be hungry for a lot more help. Understanding that a parent appreciates receiving take home sheets and newsletters through email rather than being handed them on Sunday morning will help you better communicate resources and opportunities to him. Or, knowing that a family has very little disposable income might lead you to giving a Bible or other devotional resources (and pointing them to resources in your church library) that they could not otherwise afford.

Children:

- Do they have any special needs?
- Have they/their family been experiencing a particularly difficult situation that the child is trying to understand?
- What kinds of learning activities do they respond best to: movement/music/workbooks/etc.?
- Are they showing signs of spiritual hunger or boredom?
- Are they often a hand-full, behavior-wise?
- How familiar are they with the Bible?
- Can they read and write yet?
- What do they like to do?

Questions like these can help your Children's Ministry team/teachers better understand how to care for the children and reach them with the gospel, when they are under their care in class. It also can help them suggest resources to support the parents in spiritually caring for their children, too.

Lesson #3: Questions for You in Your Ministry Setting:

1. How well could you answer these questions about the parents/children in your church?
2. What other questions would you add to these?
3. How might you find out this information?
4. Do you see trends in any area? Do a lot of your parents seem to fall in the same categories? How could noticing any trends affect how you support the parents and their children?