



Making a Difference, part 2 of 2—

Shaping Up Like Jesus

by Sharon Ellard






Early Childhood Consultant in the Sunday School Field Ministries Department


(Part 1 of this article introduced a "Shape Up Young Lives for Jesus" campaign. More ideas for this campaign continue below.)

Teacher Affirmation

In many churches, a host of men, women, and teens minister in the church nursery. Depending on the size of church, that number can range from zero to hundreds. If your church includes nursery ministers, this is a wonderful time to affirm their faithful ministry publicly. Consider creating a rebus that correlates with the awareness theme. The rebus can be incorporated into thank-you cards for the teacher. It can be used in a platform presentation of children holding poster board cutouts of the shapes as the presenter reads the statement and points to the corresponding shape. It can be made into a media presentation or displayed on a bulletin board along with photos of the nursery staff.

Seeing their service as ministry can transform how nursery helpers spend their time with babies and toddlers. When nursery ministers not only care for but also play with babies and toddlers in ways that introduce them to Jesus, teachers truly do help shape the lives of little ones. When the church as a whole understands that ministry begins in the nursery, they will become more supportive of that ministry.

Within the  of our
church, nursery teachers
are   who
 with the  of
our ministry to little ones.

Thank  for your ministry.
You make a difference in
the lives of God's little 1's.

Presentation

In some ways ministry to babies and toddlers is an "invisible ministry" of the church. In churches where babies spend all their time in the nursery, they may never be seen by many members of the congregation. Jesus ministered to little ones in front of adults. He lifted them into his arms and blessed them. Not only did that ministry affect the children, it affected the adults who watched. If Jesus considered ministry to little ones important, then it would become important to other grown-ups as well.

Plan a way to introduce the young parents and little ones to all of your church congregation. This presentation could range from a parade of young families

to a media presentation. Whichever approach is feasible for your church, try to include some specific glimpses of parent's spiritual aspirations for their little ones. In a media presentation, this could take the form of a slide of each baby that includes his or her name, age, and a quote from the parents about a Jesus trait they want their little one to learn at church. In a parade of families, a host might read information as each family is introduced.

Gift or Memento

You may want to give each family a small gift. This could range from a Bible picture board-book to a laminated picture of Jesus to a rattle shaped like a barbell or geometric shapes. Invite creative shoppers in your congregation to brainstorm a gift that young parents would enjoy for their child.

You could also give a small memento of this event. For example, create refrigerator magnets that show a picture of Jesus mounted on a shape. Several weeks before the presentation, buy small pictures of Jesus. (You may need to purchase inexpensive certificates or bookmarks that show Jesus and then cut out this picture. You could also recycle flannel board pictures of Jesus.)

Mount the pictures on plastic place mats.

Draw a shape around each picture. Use a variety of circles, triangles, squares, stars, and hearts.

Completely cover each place mat with clear ConTact paper.

Attach a piece of flexible magnetic tape to the back of each cutout.

Invite parents to choose a

magnet as a memento of their goal to shape their child to be like Jesus.

available for church members to distribute to friends and family. You can create your own message or use the sample below.

Invitations

Ask a member of your church to desktop publish invitations to mail to young families in your church. Also make the invitations

God wants every child's life to take the same shape as His child's—Jesus. With His help, we can begin that shaping process in the church nursery.

**SAMPLE
INVITATION**

Jesus loves your little one, and we do too.
Please join us for a free Sunday brunch
& worship service.

On _____, 2001 at _____ a.m.

At _____.

We are located at _____.

We will discuss how the first 3 years
shape every child's future.

Questions For Further Study—

1. When should the shaping process begin in order for a child to become “shaped like Jesus”?
2. What activities could your children's ministry team initiate to create more adult awareness of the need to begin the Christian discipleship process early?
3. How would you rate the effectiveness of your early childhood ministry in comparison to ministry to school age children?