



# Affirming Gifts in Children

by Dick Gruber

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It is Sunday morning. The first grade class is going well. Lydia smiles as she holds the visuals for her Sunday School teacher, Mr. Lisak. She loves to help and feels like an important member in the body of Christ. Lydia will grow up to be active in ministry because Mr. Lisak and other teachers like him are training her properly. When she is old, she will continue serving.

## Children Included

The apostle John wrote, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name...*except those 12 years old and younger.*" NOT! The "as many" includes boys and girls. Scripture is clear about membership in the body of Christ: There is no age requirement. Children, youth, and adults can come to know Jesus.

Each member of the Body has important gifts or abilities to be used in ministry in the church and community. "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us" (Romans 12:4-6).

Each member can contribute to the life and health of the church. "It was he who gave some to be apostles...prophets...pastors and teachers, to pre-

pare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11,12).

## Involve Them

Teachers who take the commission of Ephesians 4:11,12 seriously are raising an army of excited, serving saints. Children want to be trusted with ministry and need to be prepared. One of my goals each week, as I teach in children's church, is to involve the children in ministry. As I give opportunity, they enthusiastically volunteer.



Look around your class this week. The child who volunteers to pick up crayons may have a gift of serving. Another child always jumps at the chance to pray for his classmates. Perhaps he is an intercessory prayer warrior waiting for your encouragement. The

one who interrupts your lesson with Bible trivia can grow in his gift of teaching. You must recognize him as more than a nuisance. A girl wants to help you organize the glue sticks and art projects. She may have a gift of administration.

From these examples you can see the picture. We leaders of children in today's church must prepare them to be leaders tomorrow. Begin to view these young saints as members of the Body and treat them accordingly.

Allowing and even training children for specific ministries to others is a key link to health in the local church. This generation must become involved in ministries that allow them to grow into their gifts, even as they grow physically.

Pray for God's guidance in discovering the children's gifts. What a tragedy that teachers and leaders in both public education and church settings recognize the giftedness of only those who stand out in the crowd. It is better to look for the giftedness of each individual you serve. God certainly has endowed each member of the Body with special gifts necessary for its health.

## What Children Can Do

**Prayer** is a ministry that should involve every believer, young and old. Boys and girls as young as 2 or 3 are taught how to pray for one another in Sunday School. Children in prayer, laying hands

on the sick, must become a common practice in our Pentecostal churches. Children are invited to special prayer meetings, not to sleep on the pews but to take an active role in praying for others.

A child with a gift of **service** may help you set out supplies and visuals. I allow every child who comes early a chance to help arrange chairs and prepare the room for class. The ones who love to lay out each paper or

hand out snacks may someday be medical missionaries or church food-service coordinators.

Children can **teach**. They can act, create, and enjoy the Sunday School experience. The key to discovering giftedness is allowing every child in your class the opportunity to serve. The quiet ones may not enjoy speaking roles, but put them behind a puppet stage and watch them bloom.

Children **serve** as ushers and

worship leaders in our church. They participate in clown ministry, puppet teams, and outreach and care ministries.

What do children do in your church? It is time to let them take their God-given place in ministry in the body of Christ. Seek God's wisdom in placing children in ministry. The church of today needs their ministries, and the church of tomorrow cannot survive without them.

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### Questions For Further Study—

1. In what ways do you involve the children in your church in ministry?
2. How can you better involve children in ministry?
3. List jobs the children in your children's church can do. Beside each job, put the name of a child who shows a particular knack for doing that job.

For more information on involving children in ministry, read Dick Gruber's books, *Focus on Children: A Handbook for Elementary Teachers* and *Children's Church: Turning Your Circus into a Service*. Both are available through GPH.