



Kids in Ministry

by David Boyd
Director, National Children's Ministries Agency

Trent, Tonya, Shane, and six other kids finished packing up the puppets, loading the sound equipment, and putting away the old PVC puppet stage. What a day it had been! Where had all those kids come from? When the loud music began announcing that Sidewalk Sunday School was about to begin, kids seemed to come from everywhere. Seventeen kids accepted Jesus as Savior. Hopefully, many of them would be riding the bus to church on Sunday.

What makes these past memories of that ministry team so special? It's those three kids, now years later, leading ministries of their own. Shane is a youth pastor in North Dakota. Trent is planting a new church in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Tonya is a pastor's wife in North Dakota. Tonya's younger brother Troy, who joined the team a couple of years later, is now completing a chaplaincy course for the United States Army. Ministry breeds ministry. The calling of God on kids' hearts plants His Spirit deeply within.

Many children's leaders have discovered that involving children in ministry deepens the child's walk with Christ. They are correct. Ministry begins by having the kids participate in smaller responsibilities, like running the

sound, doing the PowerPoints, or registering visitors. Involvement in ministry now helps children to be willing to allow God to use them to change the world as they grow older. Quality children's ministry goes far beyond the doors of the church. It inspires kids to hear God's voice and follow His command to minister to others, wherever that may be.



How Do You Lead Children into Ministry?

First, make sure every child knows that God has a plan and purpose for his life. Second, make sure children know that they can hear God's voice and that He has ministry for them to do today. Third, deepen a child's walk with God by teaching him

the power of prayer, the closeness of God through worship, the heart of God through sacrificial missions giving, the direction of God through His Word, and the power of God through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Fourthly, provide ways for children to be involved in ministry now. Don't just let them sit and be "observers of ministry."

In our children's ministry programs, we had what we called the "Usher Program" for fifth and sixth graders. These kids did the work of the ministry in children's church. They were our greeters, our registrars, our offering takers, our discipline watchers, and our helpers for any area that we needed them. They were also our altar workers and our prayer warriors. They laid hands on the sick and prayed for kids to be saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.

These kids also read Scripture verses, participated in skits, and even did entire services by themselves. We also trained them by putting discipleship requirements on them and meeting with them on a regular basis for training and discipleship. Over our 18 years of being full-time children's pastors, a large number of our "ushers" are now in full-time ministry. Was it because they were kids' church ushers? Maybe, but mostly it was because being

involved in ministry gave them a heart for ministry that was open to the call of God.

It's Simple

Ministry can also be as simple as taking a team of kids to a nursing home where they discover people in need. It's as simple as a group of kids cleaning an elderly person's yard, painting a fence, planting flowers, or mowing a lawn. It's as simple as a puppet team performing a short kids' show and sharing the gospel message. True ministry lets children feel they've made a difference. They discover that a little of their time and a little of their love, mixed with prayer, can bless a multitude of souls.

Another great area of ministry is BGMC. BGMC teaches kids to know about the lost people of the world. Once kids learn about the world, they begin to care for the world, then pray for the

world, and finally, give so the world can be won for Christ.

These kids develop a heart of compassion for the lost and needy in the world around them. These kids are also the ones who share their lunches at school or give their toys to needy children. They're the ones who often are called by God to full-time service. Missions is a ministry any child can do.

Affirm the Children

Little David came home from camp to announce to his father that God had called him to be a preacher. His father proceeded to say, "I'll try to lead you down a different road, but if I can't, then I suppose it's God." That's not the kind of encouragement David was looking for, but fortunately, a dear saint-like Sunday School teacher and an awesome pastor took him under their wings. Soon he was part of a

church youth choir traveling and singing on a ministry team.

That was me. My dad eventually came around and believed my call was from God, but it was my Sunday School teacher and pastor who affirmed my calling and gave me the confidence to follow the path.

Teach your children to minister. Affirm their call. Take them on multiple ministry opportunities in your community and in the United States. Teach all of your children that there are plenty of elderly people, poor families, and children in your community who need someone to care for them, reach out to them, and share the love of Jesus with them.

A child who regularly leads others to Christ isn't the child who is apt to be led astray in the years to come. A child who leads today becomes the adult leader of tomorrow.

Questions for Further Study—

1. What benefits can you gain from involving children in ministry?
2. How can children develop a heart of compassion for the lost?

This article is reprinted from the Summer 2002 issue of *Fanning the Flame*, a quarterly newsletter for children's workers produced by the National Children's Ministries Agency. *Fanning the Flame* is mailed free to children's pastors and directors in the local church. For additional copies and back issues contact GPH at 1-800-641-4310.

