



# At Church Alone

by Bob Hahn

*Children's Ministries Pastor at First Assembly of God, Joliet, Illinois*

**W**hat can you do to help children feel comfortable and accepted at church when their parents do not attend church with them? How can you teach children or encourage them to live for God when their primary role models, Mom and Dad, are not committed to church or are not even Christians?

Many questions can come to mind when we see children in church whose parents aren't there. Some are dropped off by a parent on the way to work, to the grocery store, or to the mall. Many come on a church bus or van. A few may come with another family who attends. However they come, or whatever the motive for sending them, it is no accident that these souls are now a part of our assembly, and we need to bless them with the love of God and knowledge of the Lord.

## Love the Children

Christ insisted that we never forbid the little children to come to Him. These lives are precious to the Lord and we should treasure them, bless them, and show that we love them with the love of God. If they don't feel accepted and cared about at church, they won't feel accepted and cared about by God.

Once we understand where each child is coming from and

what his special needs may be, we can minister to him more effectively. For example, the child with Attention Deficit Disorder (A.D.D.) should be given a little extra patience when his attention strays from the 12-minute Bible story. The hyperactive child should get



special consideration when we notice she can't remain seated in a folding chair for more than 15 minutes. Kids with dysfunction, abuse, or neglect in the home need a lot of tender loving care and as much positive attention as they can get.

## Know the Parent

The home telephone number of the parents is helpful to have in case of an emergency. It is also advisable to call them if there is any incident where they would need to be consulted. Routine calls to the home on the child's progress, special honors, or to announce a special event, will put the parent at ease with who you are and how much you care. At the very least, you should try to develop a friendly telephone relationship with a mom or a dad by calling them a few times each year.

A general permission slip with a liability waiver and medical information is valuable if the parents cannot be contacted in an emergency. Alternate phone numbers for reaching the parents or a relative should be listed as well. The permission slip can contain a broadly worded statement to permit the child to participate in any activity the church volunteers may plan. Such a signed document will not only help you get to know the family better but it will also communicate to the home how conscientious your church is.

## Communicate the Rules

Children will be more comfortable at church if they know the rules. Bus rules, class rules, rules for respect to others and church property need to be

communicated. Children should be informed verbally and in writing. If the rules are not completely understood, how can the children be expected to comply?

Rules include obedience to teachers, drivers, and other adults. Attendance to class at the right time is important because they should not be

allowed to skip class or roam the building. These rules protect both the child and the church.

### **Intercede With God**

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1).

Our work with children in

God’s house is spiritual. Only Jesus can change lives. Pray that He will not only empower you to be an effective teacher in the lives of these children, but pray also that He would give you the wisdom to know how to make each one feel His love through you.

---

### **Questions For Further Study—**

1. List the children in your classroom who come to church without their parents.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How can you more effectively minister to those children?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How can you more effectively minister to their parents?

This article originally appeared in *Young Explorers: Life’s Ups And Downs*. Young Explorers is a grade-school children’s church program that utilizes environmental themes for a fun learning experience. For a complete theme chart and order form, call 1-800-641-4310.

