



Managing Your Ministry, part 1 of 2—

Rethinking Ministry to Children

by Darren Daugherty, Pastor of Children and Family Ministries
at Summit Avenue Assembly of God, St. Paul, Minnesota

Whether you are a newcomer to children's ministry or an established veteran, building a ministry to children is a never-ending process. God has commissioned us to be contractors in ministry (1 Corinthians 3:10). Just as we build our lives for His glory, we must also build our ministries to glorify Him.

The Children's Ministry Builder

Builders of children's ministry programs must be aware of trends in children's ministry, be effective in recruiting and training other builders, and know how to work within existing structures. The skill by which they carry out their responsibilities grows with time, but the builders must choose to increase this skill.

In his book, *Spiritual Leadership*, J. Oswald Sanders mentioned the lives of famous missionaries and church history leaders. Sanders said, "God gave these leaders gifts and talents that fit the mission to which they were called. What raised these men above their fellows was the degree to which they developed those gifts through devotion and discipline." As children's ministry builders, we must continue to learn and grow in the gifts God has given us.

Evaluate Your Existing Structure

Some time ago we went through a major evaluation of our children's ministries: Why do I do what I do? Do I ever feel I am just a program director? Am I really making a difference in the children? A clear focus concerning the purpose of your ministry can help you answer these questions.

In his book, *The Contemplative Pastor*, Eugene Peterson said, "All these things I am so busy doing—they aren't being done in that pastorless congregation, and nobody seems to mind. What if I, without leaving, quit doing them right now? Would anybody mind?" He then explained, "I did, and they don't." How much of our busy-ness in children's ministry would be missed by people in our congregations?

Our evaluation process can be beneficial for existing, as well as newly formed, children's ministries.

1. Blueprint: Specific Objectives

The first step was to make our objectives clear. We must have a clear focus on how we are to carry out the mandates of Scripture. As children's ministry builders, we need a blueprint. Specific objectives become the details that make up the blueprint.

In his book, *The Purpose*

10 Tips in Building and Remodeling

1. Grow in the gifts God has given you and try new ways of growing.
2. Do not start too much too soon.
3. Develop ministry purposes and objectives, then develop programs and events that support them.
4. Do not give up. If you are a new children's ministry builder, do not get discouraged if you are the only one "building" for some time.
5. Try not to add without taking something away if remodeling an existing structure.
6. Spend time with your workers to build relationships.
7. Include parents.
8. Stick it out. Longevity in a ministry position will bring great rewards.
9. Keep your own relationship with God top priority.
10. Keep your family before your ministry.

Driven Church, Rick Warren summarized Christ's five purposes for His church: worship, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, and service. We started with these five purposes for our ministry to children and their families. On a piece of paper we made two vertical columns—one labeled "Help Children" and the other "Help Parents." In both columns we wrote the five purposes and listed specific objectives under each purpose.

2. Inspection: Ministry Assessment

We then listed all the children's ministry programs and events over the past 7 years. (If you are building a children's ministry from scratch, list all of the programs and events you may want to incorporate into your ministry and evaluate their usefulness, using your specific objectives.) We then placed each program and event

into one or two of the following categories: discontinue; continue as is; continue after making changes; bring back into commission. We also added a column for programs and events we wanted to start.

We then put each program and event on its own evaluation sheet. This helped us examine each program and event as it related to our objectives. As we evaluated each program, we could then place it in the appropriate columns on the master sheet.

This process is time-consuming, but it has proved useful in our children's ministry building process. We are now better able to answer the question, "Why do we do what we do?"

Evaluating your ministry with your goals and purposes as the standard brings confidence to you, your workers, and the children's parents.

3. Accessibility: For All

Builders are concerned with making buildings accessible to different people. There are three areas of accessibility we should be concerned about in children's ministry:

1. Non-Christians. Is your children's ministry an outreach? If you cannot bring kids to the church, are you bringing the church to them? How well do you welcome visiting children?

2. Christians. Is your children's ministry making disciples? Do your programs and activities foster spiritual growth in children?

3. Parents. Do parents feel welcome in your children's ministry? Do parents feel you are on their side?

Setting goals and evaluating your existing program can go a long way in helping you manage your ministry to children.

Questions For Further Study—

1. What gifts do you have that make your children's ministry more effective?
2. What gifts do you recognize in lay people in your congregation that could be utilized in your children's ministry?
3. What do you do on a regular basis to build a relationship with your children's workers? with parents?