



Part 2 of 2—

21 Ways to Shape the 21st Century

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(Continued from Part 1.)

11 **Look for weekday strategies to build relationships.** Young children (and their parents) will enjoy a card, a phone call, or a visit with homemade cookies. When it is possible, sending e-mail is fast, free, and fun. If possible, try to include a photo, graphic, or web-site address that parents and children can use during the week to learn more about living for Jesus.

12 **Search for Internet help.** If you do not own a computer, check at your local library. Many libraries provide free access to the Internet, and their staff will help you learn how to use it too. The Internet can be a source of free or affordable recipes, games, pictures, sound, and more.

13 **Have some fun during every lesson.** Fun has more spiritual potential than we realize. Children will come again when they have fun. They make friends more easily with fun. A fun part of a Bible lesson may be repeated with friends during the week. What's fun for young children? Think of what children choose to do every day. Eat snacks, play games, sing songs, and use stickers are some examples. Watch for ways to con-

nect these kinds of fun activities to Bible learning in your classroom.

14 **Learn how to include children with special needs.** Children with mental and physical challenges need to know Jesus. Jesus was moved with compassion for the blind, deaf, and lame. You can help even young children know how to befriend those with special needs.

15 **Ask God to help your class become a refuge for hurting children.** Here's what one man remembers about Sunday School: "When I was a child, school tore me apart 5 days a week, but each week at church my Sunday School teacher put me back together." That boy grew up to become a spiritual adviser to a president of our country.

16 **Teach children God loves them.** Sunday School teachers can demonstrate God's love for children. They can look happy to see the children at God's house. They can show mercy and grace to young children. They can plan Bible lessons children will love. They can tell young children that God loves them. All of these efforts combine with the work of the Holy Spirit in each child's life

to nurture faith in God's love.

17 **Teach children to love God.** Teachers can help children express their love of God through words, through worship, through service, through obedience, and through relationships.

18 **Teach children to love one another.** Young children are egocentric. They see the world from only one point of view—their own. Sunday School teachers can help children learn to love others as well as they love themselves. Enjoyable rituals and projects that focus on being kind, taking turns, working together, and sharing, help children enjoy loving others.

19 **Pray for your students.** Get to know them well enough to pray for them specifically. Keep a prayer journal that records your prayers and God's answers. Remember to thank God for the answers.

20 **Follow your Leader.** Jesus is in charge of building His church. He empowers His followers for effective ministry. He draws people into the church. As you faithfully offer yourself for ministry, you become a partner with Him.

21 **Commit yourself to ministry.** At the end of the 20th century too

many early childhood teachers viewed themselves as baby-sitters rather than ministers. As a result, too many church nurseries and early childhood Sunday Schools and classes were led by rotating staffs—people who helped once a month. That can

change in the 21st century. As nursery teachers and early childhood ministers, we can see ourselves as God sees us. We can understand that as we minister to little children, Jesus considers it ministry to Him.

Children of the 21st century

can grow like Jesus did in the first century: “Jesus continued to **learn** more and more and to **grow physically. People liked him** and he **pleased God**” (Luke 2:52, International Children’s Bible).

Questions For Further Study—

1. List four things you can do during the week to build relationships with children and their families.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
2. What are some “fun” things that children in your church do during the week? How can you incorporate these activities into church time?
3. Brainstorm with your children’s ministry workers to discover several activities you can use to help children learn to love one another.