



Ignited to Serve— the Early Childhood Ministry

by Carolyn Burwell

It is exciting to observe the number of people who see early childhood as a priority. As we are inspired and “Ignited to Serve,” I believe we (early childhood workers) have an opportunity to bring this ministry into a correct focus. For too long early childhood has been relegated to the back room and viewed as necessary baby-sitting. Yet it is such a vital ministry to families and the church. I wish this special ministry would move along at a quicker rate, but it is encouraging to see it creeping forward.

I recently did some research on the Internet concerning all ages of early childhood. One church site I found had a statement that ignited me! It said that their early childhood education is an intentional ministry. That is more than baby-sitting. Perhaps we all need to put this in writing so everyone could see that early childhood ministry is a planned course of action.

In the coming days and year, we need to ask God to continually ignite us to serve the young

children and families that are placed in our care. We need to prayerfully ask God to ignite others in our churches so the needs of these families and children will be met and they will come to love and serve Jesus. It takes a team of people to accomplish



great things in early childhood education.

I often receive phone calls and e-mails asking for help. I find it interesting that most of the questions and issues in early

childhood are the same, regardless of the location and size of the church. We need to intentionally have excellence in these areas. When we do I believe early childhood will quickly move to the front and be viewed as the vital ministry it is. Here are some attributes that can assist in achieving this goal:

- Attractive and equipped rooms that invite a child to enter and to return
- Established policies and guidelines
- Planned, developmentally appropriate activities
- Trained and caring workers
- Safe, secure, and sanitary facilities

If you have any questions or concerns about early childhood (ages 0–5), please call or e-mail. Both the national Sunday School department and the Children's Ministries Agency will be happy to assist you. We want to keep fanning the flame that has been ignited.

I personally wish everyone could experience the innocence and enjoyment of a preschooler. They are refreshing and such fun to be with. Sarah Carter, one

of our secretaries here at CMA, shared a recent visit she had with a preschooler. The two were sitting on the front porch and Sarah asked her little friend to identify every animal sound she could think of. The child eagerly obliged and knew every one of them. Sarah glanced down and

noticed that the preschooler's shoes had *1-2-3* and *a-b-c* written on the soles. So she asked her little friend what her shoes said. The child thought and looked up and replied, "Squeak, squeak!"

Questions for Further Study—

1. Develop your own "planned course of action" for your early childhood education department.
2. List at least three creative ways you could ignite your congregation with a vision for ministry within your early childhood department. Ask God for direction in this area.
3. In reading some of the attributes that assist in achieving excellence within early childhood ministries, in what areas does your ministry need to improve? What can be done immediately to improve the ministry? What steps can be taken to improve the others?