



# Early Childhood Ministry— Seeing the Need

by Sharon Ellard

**A**n early childhood minister is anyone who is commissioned to minister to children from birth through kindergarten. The position may be paid or volunteer, full time or part time. The title may be coordinator, superintendent, or pastor, but the goal is to create a vision for ministering to young children.

## Evangelizing Young Families

The birth of a child creates a time for effective evangelism. New parents, who are tenderhearted toward their little ones, think about spiritual matters. According to a USA Today poll, 40 percent of all Americans attend church more after becoming parents.

The church who ministers to young families will attract these parents. A minister of early childhood can organize outreach to new parents. At the same time, the additional stresses of parenting make regular church attendance more of a challenge. So young couples who have attended church may drop out after becoming parents. Churches who offer biblically based ministry to new parents are more likely both to retain and to recruit young families.



**Suggestion:** A minister of early childhood can begin Bible study support groups for church and community parents.

## Nurturing Spiritual and Personality Formation

Our attitudes influence how we respond to God, to others, and to ourselves. During early childhood, life-long



attitudes develop. In fact, some counselors believe our personalities are 85 percent formed by the time we are six years old.



**Suggestion:** A minister of early childhood can guide the nurturing of young children and can cast a vision for early childhood ministries.

## Building a Ministry Team

In group settings like Sunday School, young children need more individual attention. This means that whoever is recruiting workers for early childhood ministries (average ratio of 1:4) must recruit two to three times as many workers as a children's pastor (1:8) or a youth leader (1:12). In addition, young children need care at more times (e.g., during morning and evening services, support groups, choir practice, and business meetings).



**Suggestion:** A minister of early childhood can recruit church members to minister to young children during many church events.

## Scheduling Staff

The early childhood teaching staff often includes teams of teachers and helpers who rotate in their ministry.



**Suggestion:** A minister of early childhood can coordinate the schedules of all early childhood teachers and helpers and can send reminders and notes of thanks to those who minister.

## Discipling Staff

Young children are global learners who learn best when all their senses are used. Their learning style requires a very different teaching style from other ages. Teachers need training in order to understand why to and how to use hands-on learning as they disciple young children. Spirit-filled and trained teachers are essential in early childhood discipling.



**Suggestion:** A minister of early childhood can provide an array of training resources to use in a variety of settings to equip adults for ministry to young children.

## Creating Learning Areas

Young children need opportunities to practice Bible principles at church. So early childhood rooms need more than tables and chairs. Building in the Block Center, acting out family life in the Home Center, and painting a response to a Bible story in the Art Center helps young children apply Bible stories to their own lives.



**Suggestion:** A minister of early childhood can take leadership in tailoring early childhood rooms to the needs of children and the budget of the church.

## Ministering to Parents

The Bible gives the main responsibility for spiritual training to parents. Church teachers who team up with parents support Bible learning at home as well as at church.



**Suggestion:** A minister of early childhood can help teachers and parents coordinate their efforts to disciple children.

## The Work of the Holy Spirit

When a Spirit-filled minister of early childhood prayerfully disciplines little ones, the Holy Spirit adds to the church young families God is calling to join His family.



**Suggestion:** A minister of early childhood helps young children call God “Father.”

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## Questions for Further Study—

1. How can a church attract parents of young children?
2. Whose responsibility is it to spiritually train children? How can church teachers help?



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