



part 1 of 3—

# Building an Effective Children's Ministry Team in the Smaller Church

by Joey Ellis

## Vision



*"Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18)*



*"Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run." (Habakkuk 2:2, NASB)*

Building an effective children's team begins with **vision**. Some pastors may depend on a paid staff to help fulfill their vision, but the pastor of a smaller church depends on his or her ability to implement the vision through volunteers. Teams in any size church are built around the leader's vision. The question is: What do you want to see happen in your children's ministry?

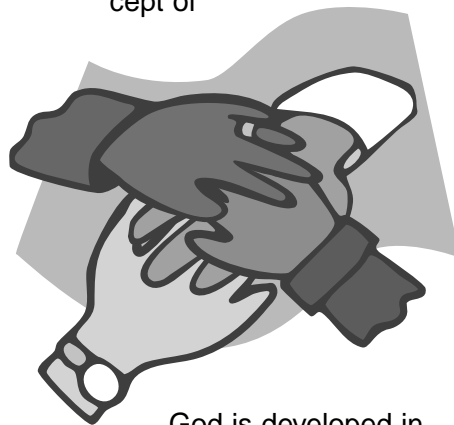
### Vision is a Great Communicator

People do not simply want to fill a position; they want to be a part of a mission. What greater mission is there than raising children to serve Jesus? It is easier to build boys and girls than to repair men and women. Pray for a God-sized vision and then recruit based on your vision.

### Vision Is Caught, not Taught

Vision is communicated in casual settings as well as in pre-planned, formal settings. Speak of your vision in the hallways of

the church as you are walking alongside your church members. Talk about it over lunch with a board member. Communicate it through statements of purpose, such as, "Our nursery team has the unique privilege of being some of the first people to introduce babies to Jesus. Because we know the concept of



God is developed in the mind of a child before age six, we view our nursery as a critical element in the foundation of a child's spiritual development. Would you like to be a part of a ministry that is first in line to say to these precious boys and girls 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so'?"

### Have a Vision for Your Size of Ministry

Build on the strengths of being small. Not all parents are interested in large programs.

Some parents feel more comfortable leaving their children in the care of a teacher who has fewer students. Smaller churches can offer more individualized attention to children. Promote and publicize according to your strengths. New families and the volunteer core in your church are interested in being a part of a winning team, not necessarily a large team.

## Recruiting



*"We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:3,4)*

Pray for God to place the spiritual needs of your children on the hearts of your adults. Pray for God's team. You do not just want adult bodies in classrooms; you want people who sense your vision and have a heart for children. The church will take on the heart of the pastor.

Those closest to the leader help determine that organization's level of success. Building a team is more than simply unloading responsibility onto someone else. It is giving them your heart and investing in them. We use the acronym *T.E.A.M.*—Together Everybody Accomplishes More.

Secure leaders surround themselves with people who are better than they are in certain areas. This is the beauty of the diverse ministry gifts God has given to the Church. Building a team can happen many ways.

### **Cast Your Vision Publicly**

Recruit through casting your vision from the pulpit. Let your congregation know you have a vision and are acting on it. During sermons based on your vision, you can lead people to commit to ministry. Have them respond in writing on a response card. This method gets the quickest exposure to the widest audience. Call everyone who responds.

Not everyone who responds will fulfill his or her commitment. Some who respond should not work with children. Have other areas of ministry available for those whose personalities and giftings do not fit children's ministries. Before beginning a recruiting campaign, have a method of conducting background checks on each person.

### **Recruit One-on-One**

Observe those in your congregation who love Jesus, are faithful, and love you as pastor. Contact them about joining you in your pursuit of God's vision for your church. This is the most

time-consuming way of recruiting, yet it can prove to be the most effective way to produce long-term ministry teams. Why? Because you, as pastor, have personally asked them to help you carry out your vision.

### **Appoint a Director of Children's Ministries**

This person gives overall coordination to children's ministries. This individual may be someone presently involved or a parent of a child in the church. The director will help shoulder the responsibility so departmental leaders will not need to go to the pastor with their concerns and questions.

### **Establish a Children's Ministries Council**

A children's ministries council is another avenue to approach when building your team. If one individual is not readily available for the director's position, create a council. It can be composed of each ministry team leader and serve directly under the leadership of the senior pastor. This can be effective, but it requires more time. And you may find that one member of your council may be capable of handling the director's position.

Beyond the director's position, ministries can be divided by function and responsibility: nurs-

ery, preschool, children's church, Missionettes, Royal Rangers, Junior Bible Quiz, children's choirs, puppet and drama teams, Sunday School, and outreach. Each of these ministries needs one key leader or overseer. Do not try to fill all of these positions at one time. Start with the position that seems easiest to fill and then train its leader. Some people may be able to oversee more than one area. But make sure the people you select to lead children's ministries positions also have the opportunity to receive ministry themselves.

### **Recruit with a Plan**

Before you begin to build your team, make a list of every position for which you need a volunteer. As you fill these positions, write them down. Your faith will increase as you see what God is doing.

Develop job descriptions for each ministry position. It is much easier to recruit when you can hand volunteers descriptions of what you are asking them to do. Job descriptions communicate to your volunteers that you have put thought into the positions you are asking them to fill, and they enable your leaders to minister with greater confidence and direction.

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part 2 of 3—

# Building an Effective Children's Ministry Team in the Smaller Church

by Joey Ellis

## Keeping



*"I thank my God every time I remember you."  
(Philippians 1:3)*



*"Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform." (Exodus 18:20)*

After you have rallied people around your vision, *keeping* them is important. The more consistent you can be in your leadership team, the more effective will be your ministry to children.

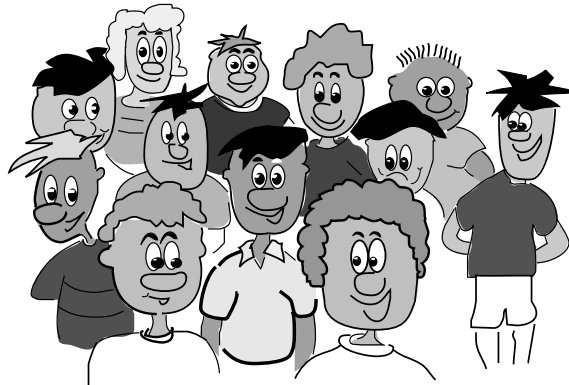
Change creates insecurity in children and in their parents. Seeing the same face in the classroom week after week fosters familiarity and trust.

Keeping your volunteers involves two important areas: **appreciation** and **training**. If you show your people you appreciate them, they will try to do their best for you. If you provide training, they will also try to do their best.

## Pastoral Visit

The pastor and leaders of the church need to understand children's ministry. Volunteers need to know you are aware of what they are doing. The pastor needs

to visit the nursery during a Sunday morning service. At the beginning of the service, have your adult service leader announce: "Good morning. Welcome to church. Pastor is visiting our nursery and pre-school areas this morning, encouraging our lay ministry team who faithfully minister to your chil-



dren each week. He will join us later in the service." This lets your congregation and visitors know you care about children and adult volunteers. From the pulpit the following week, accentuate the positive things you saw. Such visits will also help you know what areas need improvement.

## Financial Support

One of the most effective ways of showing appreciation for

children's ministries is financial support. We put our money where our priorities are. Look at your financial records.

## Praise

Sincere, public praise is invaluable. Compliment your team in public. From the pulpit, praise your children's ministries team. Use various opportunities to give verbal praise. This lets your team members know you have confidence in them and are aware of their ministry to children.

If you have nothing about which to praise your team, then it may be time to rebuild your team. Use statements like: "It thrills me when I hear that our children love coming to church. Parents tell me their children get them out of bed on Sunday mornings and ask 'Is it time to go to church yet?'" Our dedicated and trained staff of men and women welcomes your children to their classrooms. Each week our teachers share with their classes the good news that Jesus loves them and has a plan for their lives."

Not only have you given your children's ministries team a positive shot in the arm, but you have communicated your vision of reaching children for Jesus.





part 3 of 3—

# Building an Effective Children's Ministry Team in the Smaller Church

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## Training

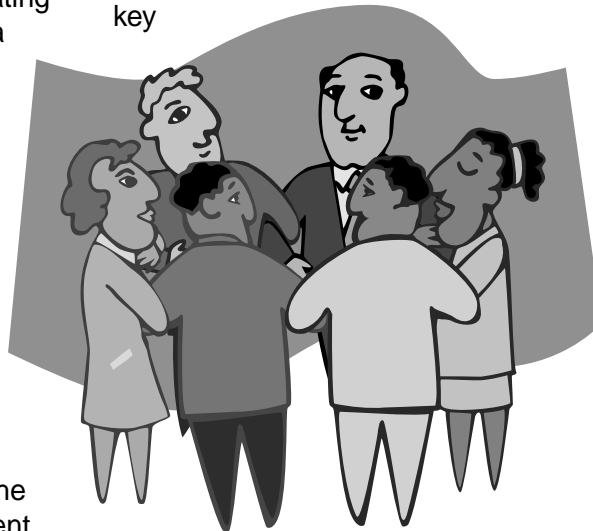
When people catch the vision and commit to ministry, they sincerely want to do a good job. Yet in many cases they have never received training for their ministry. Training builds confidence. There is nothing more frustrating than spending an hour with a group of kids in a classroom and not knowing what you are doing. Too often volunteers find themselves teaching a class without being properly equipped. This is discouraging for your leaders and your children.

Training is essential to the long-term growth of your children's ministry. When a young man or woman joins the armed forces, he or she is sent to basic training to be trained for battle. We are training our children's leaders to do battle for the spiritual lives of our children.

Training events can be as simple as having one of your experienced teachers conduct several classes on creative teaching techniques. Send your team to a training event at another location or invite an outside ministry into your church to help train your leaders.

Invest in your team. Most districts have Christian education

conventions. Several children's ministries conferences are held each year. Be willing to invest financially in your teachers. In a small church, finances may not permit paying for everyone to go to a conference. When you meet with your key



lead-ers, explain your desire for training. Communicate the financial limitations of the church. If there is a church vehicle they can use, have the church cover the vehicle expenses. Maybe the church can only pay the registration fee or one-half of the registration. When teachers sense your desire to help them minister to children by providing training, they will love you for it and will make an extra effort to attend training events.

**B**uilding an effective children's ministry team is critical for any church that desires to reach this generation for Christ. Small churches have opportunities for growth that are unique to their situation. Your team of volunteers can be built around a safe, sanitary, loving, and creative children's ministry. By using these principles, you can build a children's ministry team that will effectively teach and train your kids in their walk with Christ.

Beyond the director's position, ministries can be divided by function and responsibility: nursery, preschool, children's church, Missionettes, Royal Rangers, Junior Bible Quiz, children's choirs, puppet and drama teams, Sunday School, and outreach. Each of these ministries needs one key leader or overseer. Do not try to fill all of these positions at one time. Start with the position that seems easiest to fill and then train its leader. Some people may be able to oversee more than one area. But make sure the people you select to lead children's ministries positions also have the opportunity to receive ministry themselves.

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**Questions for Further Study—**

1. What makes people sincerely want to do a good job?
2. What builds confidence?
3. What is essential to the long-term growth of your children's ministry?
4. How can you invest in your children's ministry team?