



Empowering the Early Childhood Volunteers

by Carolyn Burwell

As I think of early childhood ministry and volunteers, I can't help but smile and think of the old joke, "How many does it take to...?" Well, if you ask, "How many volunteers does it take to have an effective early childhood ministry?" I think the answer should be "a church full!" The early childhood ministry doesn't actually require a "church full" of volunteers, but the many tasks at hand could involve the entire church in some manner.

A larger number of volunteers make the work easier. Happiness is contagious and attracts other people to join the ministry team. On the other hand, when the same people do all the work, they become tired. The joy goes out of ministry and the work becomes a chore.

If you are the leader of early childhood ministries in your church, take a few minutes and write down all of the things that have to be done weekly, monthly, and yearly. Next, check the list to see how many of these tasks you do. If you do more than the volunteers, you might want

to rethink how you are doing things. I've been there and realize that it's your job and that sometimes it is easier for you to do something than to give that task to someone else. However, to give value to early childhood ministry requires a team of workers—just as with other areas of ministry.



The tasks that need to be done in early childhood ministry are many and varied. From changing sheets to teaching a Bible story, all are important. If value is given to the task, people will want to do it. When everyone realizes that no task is greater than another and that all are vital, the tasks become ministry—not a chore. If you have

a shortage of volunteers, try spreading the behind-the-scenes work around. I believe doing so will attract others to join the early childhood ministry team.

A wonderful lady in a church where I once served called me and said her three-year-old daughter was thrilled with the birthday card she'd received from me. This lady was having a difficult pregnancy and feeling useless. She asked if she

could send out the birthday cards for our early childhood department. What a great idea! This gave both my secretary and me more time to do other things no one else could do. What it did for the expectant mother was greater. She now had a meaningful role in the body of Christ. She continued serving in this role long after the baby was born. Not only did she send out cards, she asked if she could come in during the week and sanitize our equipment and toys.

Numerous stories could be told about the incredible volunteers who serve every week in the early childhood ministry. Yet I believe there are many more who could be serving in this

