



Consider the Children

Interview with Thomas Trask

If I were pastoring today, children's ministry would be a top priority in my church," states Thomas E. Trask, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. His words are a clarion call reminding us of the preciousness of children and the church's responsibility to provide for their spiritual needs.

In this interview, Trask "considers the children" and offers his insights into this most important aspect of the church's ministry.

Q **Though not every church can afford a children's pastor, how critical is it for churches to have some type of children's ministry?**

TRASK: It is absolutely necessary. Someone has said that children are the church of tomorrow. That's not entirely true; they are also part of the church today. But should the Lord delay His coming, our children will be the leaders of tomorrow. By investing in its children now, the church is investing in its future.

Statistics will substantiate this—if you reach a child with the gospel before the age of seven, he has a much greater chance of accepting Christ as Savior than if you wait until he becomes an adult and then try to reach him. It is imperative,

then, for churches to have some type of ministry outreach to children. What I see happening in the church today is that leaders have been awakened to the importance of ministry to children.

Whether a church can afford a full-time children's pastor is not at issue here. There are people in churches—even in small churches—who will give themselves to children's ministry. The important key is for each church to make provision for nurturing and instructing its children.

Q **What qualities are pastors looking for in their children's pastor?**

TRASK: A senior pastor needs someone who has a heart for children, someone whom God has called and who is comfortable with children. The children's pastor needs a passion to reach boys and girls and then pour himself or herself into that passion.

The same God who calls a person to youth work, evangelism, missions, or to a visitation ministry calls men and women to minister to children—there is no question about that. The most important quality is for the children's pastor to have a burden for kids. This is essential. It takes a unique person to minister to children.

Q **Is there an option for churches who don't have the financial means to hire a children's pastor?**

TRASK: One of the great strengths in the Assemblies of God is the laity of our church. We have people in our churches willing to be trained and develop the necessary skills to minister to children. This is a very valuable ministry. Many people can use their gifts in reaching children. It would be well for a pastor to train laypeople who can oversee the children's ministry and the volunteers who work with children.

Q **What steps are involved in training laypeople to oversee children's ministries?**

TRASK: You don't have to find someone with experience to lead your children's program. Sometimes the easiest and the best way is to train a person so he or she will conduct the ministry in the way you want. There are many district, regional, and national seminars children's workers can attend to receive the training they need. There are also several books and video series that would be helpful in training a children's worker.

Parents want quality programs for their children. Training your workers and having a well-run children's program will not only minister to the children in the church, but also to the children and adults in the community. A church's children's program can be an avenue to draw families into your church.



Where do churches on limited budgets turn for curriculum and other program materials?

TRASK: There are many reasonably-priced products on the market today that people can buy. In fact, the GPH catalog has several low-cost items for children's ministry. But churches do not need to buy a whole array of products to have a successful children's ministry. Ingenuity is a marvelous tool. I've watched mothers and children's workers take everyday things and use them in ministry to children.

Also, whether our churches realize this or not, *Radiant Life* produces the best Pentecostal curriculum on the market. It is also the most reasonably priced of any curricula.

Many district offices have a lending library through their Christian education department.

They have ministry items that churches can borrow for their children's ministry.



Children's ministry is certainly a critical subject in this day where television is doing most of the teaching of our children. Why is it even more critical that we develop strong programs for our children?

TRASK: The incidents at Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; and other cities across America are awakening the nation to some of the challenges of what's happened to young people—boys and girls coming from broken homes, coming from settings where there's been no training and no parenting models for them. This is a day of opportunity for the church—not because we are opportunists, but because our eyes are opened to the opportunity that God presents. The Church is relevant to the need of the day. And one of those areas of relevancy is in children's ministries.

I can tell you—if I were pastoring today, children's ministry would be a top priority in my church. Our executive director of Assemblies of God World Missions established a great

church in Latin America through child care. Today thousands upon thousands are being ministered to as a result of that vision. In the same way, we can establish churches today through first ministering to children.



How can churches minister to the families of the children who might come to their church through a special outreach?

TRASK: With the breakdown in family structure today, there are many single parents. It is important for the family to find a church home that has ministry to children. And it is a wise church that sees an opportunity to minister to the parents as well. When you minister to someone's children, it opens the door to minister to the family.

There are many different ministries today the church can provide for families. The church was never meant to do the part of the parent, but parents are looking for help in instructing and training their children. They recognize the pull that society is having on their children. The wise pastor and the alert church will provide this help—and it will give opportunity to minister to the moms and dads as well.

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