



The Aim of Children's Ministries, part 1 of 3—

Eight Goals for Empowering the Next Generation

by David Boyd

"Does God hear me when I pray?"

"What is speaking in tongues?"

"How come I can't understand it?"

"How do people get healed?"

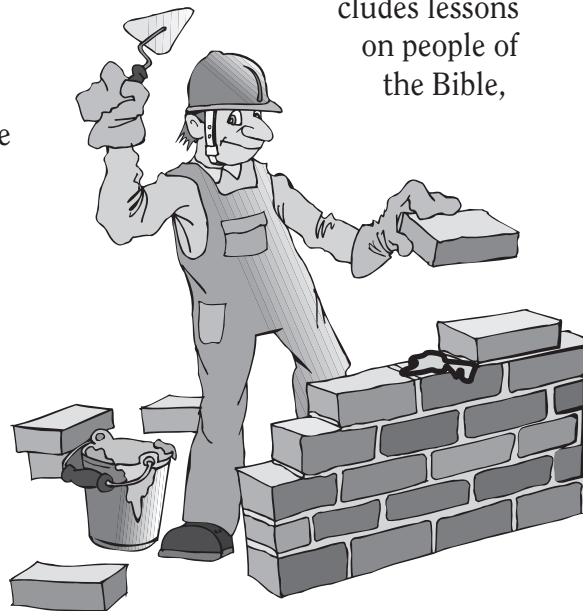
As a boy who rode the bus to church, there wasn't anyone at home who could answer these questions for me. But Pearl Gange, my Sunday School teacher, patiently answered these and many other questions I asked. Long before I realized it, I was growing up in a *Radiant Life* Sunday School!

What is a *Radiant Life* Sunday School? It is a place where Pentecostal teachers use Pentecostal curriculum and introduce children to the full gospel message of the Bible.

Scope and Sequence

A few years back, I took some graduate classes and began my first serious study of "scope and

sequence." Scope and sequence is the multi-year plan that Sunday School curriculums use to ensure that students learn a thorough balance of the Bible. A good scope and sequence takes several years to complete and includes lessons on people of the Bible,



the Commandments, miracles, doctrine, fruit of the Spirit, etc. I am so thankful that I attended a *Radiant Life* Sunday School where we studied all of God's Word.

Brick upon Brick

As I focus on the importance

of teaching children the Bible, the more I realize how valuable Sunday School was in planting the Bible and Pentecost in my life. I'm thankful for it. The Bible is the cement that stays in the foundation of a child's life for years to come. This foundation is built "brick upon brick" as teachers teach and model what it is to be a follower of Christ.

As you endeavor to build a child's spiritual foundation "brick upon brick," I'd like to share qualities of spiritual character that will help you raise up kids who will stand for God their entire lives.

Powerful in Prayer

We believe every child should be a powerful prayer warrior through regular opportunities of seeing God answer prayer.

When we teach children to pray, we are teaching them something they will be able to use the rest of their lives. Wherever they go, they will always know how to talk with God and will be able to pray when they are lonely, sad, troubled, scared,

or discouraged. They will learn that God is always there, ready to hear and answer their prayers.

Teaching children to pray also gives God the opportunity to prove His power. Children see God's answers and realize that they have a part in His miraculous plan. They believe they can make a difference, and they can. They are very capable of hearing of a need and passionately praying to God.

In teaching sessions, my wife

Mary often shares this simple way to communicate the power of prayer. As a children's leader, kids would come up to her who were not feeling well. Because she was so busy, she would hurriedly tell them to go to the office. One day, the Holy Spirit spoke to her heart and said, "What are you teaching these children? Every one of these requests is an opportunity to teach the children to pray first, and then do what is necessary." Mary

realized she was teaching these children the exact opposite and they weren't learning to make prayer a priority.

That day, prayer became a priority. When a child came to her, she prayed first. Mary and I also taught our leaders to make prayer a priority in their classes, to put prayer first in their schedules and allow time for it. And we began to see a tremendous difference in our classes and in the kids.

Questions for Further Study—

1. Are you using curriculum in your children's ministry that uses the "scope and sequence" planning?
2. How do you purposefully teach the children in your ministry the power of prayer?
3. How has prayer made a difference in your children's ministry?



The Aim of Children's Ministries, part 2 of 3—

Eight Goals for Empowering the Next Generation

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Baptized in the Holy Spirit

We believe every child should be endued with power for the Christian walk by being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a major part of our Pentecostal heritage. Yet I fear the next generation is losing out because the Holy Spirit is taking a backseat in many children's ministries. If this next generation is to be Pentecostal, then we, as leaders, need to teach them and make sure this heritage is passed on.

Determine to make the Holy Spirit part of your teaching and part of your services. Allow the Holy Spirit to move. Allow time for children to be filled. Encourage them to pray in tongues and to be used in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We must be committed to passing on the heritage of the Holy Spirit to the next generation. This is our responsibility.

Begin by planting seeds of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In our classes, children hear the message of salvation and have the opportunity to respond. But do they hear about the great gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit

that God has for each of them? Do they hear that this gift will give them the boldness to stand up for Jesus? Do they hear about speaking in tongues, which will help them as they pray? I have found that when we regularly



give children a taste of the Holy Spirit when we teach, they will build up a desire to be filled. As they seek for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, they are learning to pray, worship, seek God, feel His presence, and receive His power.

Radical in Worship

We believe every child should intimately worship God through well-chosen, age-appropriate songs, lifting hands and worshipping Him.

God wants our children to discover Him. He loves to hear them proclaim their love for Him. Worship draws children into the presence of God, so give your students the opportunity to corporately worship God and grow in Him through worship.

Worship is an environment where children discover that God is real. I'll never forget the many times I've seen children new to the faith discover God for the first time during worship. With tears running down their cheeks, ordinary children suddenly encounter the extraordinary God who becomes their very own. During worship is when children experience the presence of God in a powerful way.

Children can be taught to worship. From the very first word of the very first worship song, encourage children to lift their hands, shut their eyes, and pour out their hearts to God.

Choose just a few worship songs with simple, but powerful words. Teach about worship, and allow time at the altar.

Mobilized in Service

We believe every child should be taught the value of service in God's kingdom through opportunities to exercise his talents and abilities as he ministers to others.

Many children's leaders have discovered that involving children in ministry deepens their walk with Christ. Ministry begins by having kids participate in smaller responsibilities, like running the sound, registering visitors, etc. Involvement

in ministry helps a child to be willing to allow God to use him to change the world as he grows older.

How do you lead children in ministry? First, make sure every child knows that God has a plan and purpose for his life. Second, make sure children know that they can hear God's voice and that He has ministry for them to do today. Third, deepen a child's walk with God by teaching him the power of prayer, the closeness of God through worship, the heart of God through sacrificial missions giving, the direction of God through His Word, and the power of God through the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, provide ways for children to be involved in ministry now. Don't just let them sit and be "observers of ministry."

True ministry allows children to feel that they've made a difference. They discover that a little of their time and a little of their love, mixed with prayer, can bless a multitude of souls. Take kids to nursing homes, homeless shelters, boys and girls clubs, etc. Expose them to what it's like to minister to those less fortunate. Quality children's ministry goes far beyond the doors of the church. It inspires kids to hear God's voice and follow His commands to minister to others, wherever that may be.

Questions for Further Study—

1. List three ways you allow room for the Holy Spirit to move in your children's service.

2. What are a few ways you have taught the value of service in God's Kingdom to the children within your ministry?



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Sacrificial in Giving

We believe every child should be taught to pray for and sacrificially give to help reach the lost people of the world.

Children love to be involved in activity. Learning new things, helping in new ways, and doing things in which they can take pride are important to them. God made kids with an enormous capacity to do far more than we think possible. Sacrificially giving to God is no exception.

Do you take the time to teach your children to give? Giving is a biblical principle mandated by God. From the story of the widow and the two copper coins found in Mark 12:42, we know that the amount of money given isn't nearly as important as the sacrificial heart behind the gift. Children respond amazingly when taught about the needs of the world and about poor individuals. Children respond with the words, "Let me do it!" They want to help; they want to be a part.

Teach kids about the lost people of the world and the many needs there are. Show

them how they can give and make a difference. Teach them to pray and seek God to show them what they are to do and how they can do it. Then, let them do it!

Active in Evangelism

We believe every child should be willing to be a bold



witness for Christ and to allow his life to be used to bring glory to God and salvation to others.

God wants children everywhere to know Him, to know His commands, to accept Him, and to follow Him. This is an awesome task and a great calling. Children need to understand that salvation is a free gift because Jesus paid the price for

our sins when He died on the cross. A vital part of children's ministry is providing opportunities for children to accept Jesus and receive the gift of eternal life.

Children who know Jesus can also be taught to share their faith with others. Role-play and witnessing tools like tracts are excellent ways to let children practice and witness to others in the group at the same time. A child who regularly leads others to Christ isn't apt to be led astray in the years to come. A child who leads today becomes an adult leader tomorrow.

Baptized in Water

We believe every child needs to follow God's command to be baptized in water and to boldly stand up and publicly proclaim his faith in Christ.

Water baptism is a wonderful step of growth for kids, especially in the last year or two before they go into the youth group. Water baptism gives children the opportunity to boldly proclaim their faith in Christ by standing up in front of everyone and being obedient to Christ. Kids need to learn to be leaders, not follow-

