



The 21st Century Church, part 1 of 4—

Helping to Grow a 21st Century Church

by David Boyd, National Coordinator, Children's Ministries Agency / BGMC

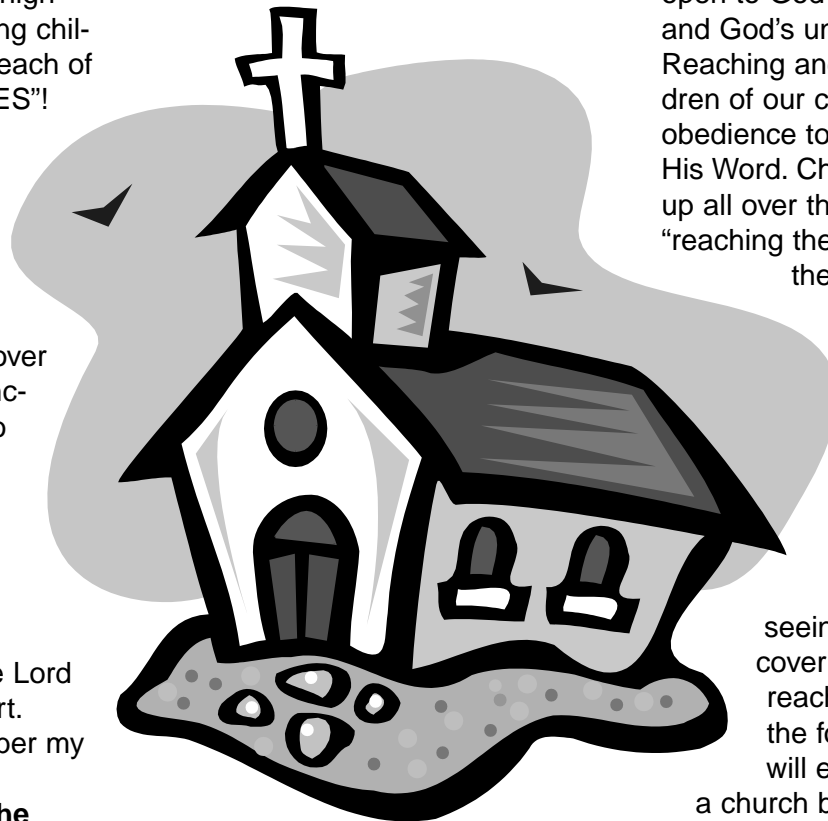
Is reaching children important for growing a 21st century church? Is it really worth the investment of time, talent, and resources to invest in the young families with children in your community? Does God's Word instruct us to place a high importance on reaching children? The answer to each of these questions is "YES"!

In Deuteronomy 6:5-9, God's Word gives three distinct commands to the church. These commands are repeated over and over as key distinctives for the Church to follow if it is to grow, remain healthy, and raise up a godly next generation. These commands are:

- Verse 5: Love the Lord God with all your heart.
- Verse 6: Remember my commands.
- **Verse 7: Teach the children.**

How remarkable it is that God sifted all His commands to the church down to these three commands; remember to love Him, remember His commands,

and teach the children. Of all the important instructions God could have given the church, He chose these three. Teaching the children was vital and still is vital to obeying God's plan for the church today.



Reaching kids has never been more important than it is today. Every rampant sin is targeted toward the world's children, causing our early teen society to be a gun-toting, sexually perverse, and disease-rampant

society. This demands that churches, pastors, and leaders stand up and say, "We will reach the children!"

God knew that children are open to be shaped. They are open to God's Spirit, God's law, and God's unchangeable love. Reaching and teaching the children of our cities is in direct obedience to God's direction in His Word. Churches are rising up all over the country and are "reaching the children"—and they are growing their churches in the process.

Here at the National Children's Ministries Agency of the Assemblies of God, we are seeing churches rediscovering this need of reaching the children. In the following articles we will examine 1) growing

a church by meeting the needs of young families with children, 2) how to invest in children's ministry in your church and the responsibilities of senior pastors in building a quality children's ministry, and 3) the discipleship goals of the Children's Ministries Agency.

Questions For Further Study—

1. What scriptural mandate challenges you to reach and disciple children for the Lord?

2. What issues do children in your community face that would challenge you as a Christian to reach them with the gospel?

3. Name three issues you must address in order to grow a 21st century church.
 - 1)

 - 2)

 - 3)



The 21st Century Church, part 2 of 4—

Growing a Church Through Children's Ministry

by David Boyd, National Coordinator, Children's Ministries Agency / BGMC

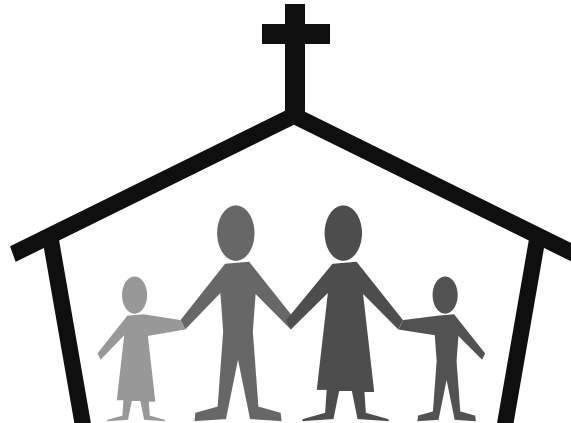
Growing a church through children's ministry seems to be a newfound discovery for churches all across America. It used to be that the top three factors families used to choose a church were location, pastor, and denomination. Not so anymore. Today the new top three is "location, pastor, and **children's ministry.**"

With the rise in danger from distraught peers and perverse adults, parents all over America are awakening to the fact that their children need to be safe, secure, and well cared for. They are looking for this both in where their kids go to school and where their kids go to church! A top-notch children's ministry will help attract young families and grow your church!

Dan Betzer, senior pastor of the thriving and growing church in Fort Myers, Florida, writes, "Our church has grown by 183 kids in the past two years!" (1998-1999). Statistics tell us that each of these 183 kids corresponds to an average of a little over one adult per child. That means that the church grew by nearly 400 children and parents during this two-year period. Obviously, these families were drawn due to a variety of reasons, but their commitment to a quality children's ministry was paying off with huge

growth in the area of new young families!

Families today are selective. If they have children, they're looking closely at the children's areas in a church. They're looking for quality facilities and quality leadership. They're looking for clean, modern, kid friendly rooms with modern equipment. In the nursery and preschool areas, they're looking for modern security measures, up-to-date equipment, and clean, sanitized toys and surroundings. They're also looking for caring



and friendly workers to receive their precious children.

Leith Anderson states: "In the past, parents picked the church and the children had to go. Increasingly today, children pick the church and the parents go where the children are happiest. Fear is also a factor; parents are concerned about safety. They appreciate churches that carefully

screen teachers and require claim checks to pick up their child. Parents are more likely to leave a church where children don't seem important."

Wow! What true statements. Today's parents look for the church that cares about the kids. Small or large, they are checking you out. Usually they only give your church one Sunday. They look at the nursery and preschool areas. They look into the children's classrooms and children's church room. They are looking for the great first impression which states, "This church loves kids!" And by the way, children's ministry is one of the areas where a big church isn't necessarily better. The nursery doesn't have to be huge to impress parents. They're impressed by the care, love, and cleanliness that are put into what you have.

Realtors are amazed that parents will choose a lesser house in a neighborhood where the schools are better. It's because parents are concerned about their kids. They will also drive further and cross denominational bounds just to find the church that will care for their kids!

Dan Betzer states: "Be honest: Ask yourself if your church is a place where young parents would bring their children?" This is quite



The 21st Century Church, part 3 of 4—

Investing in Children's Ministries

by David Boyd, National Coordinator, Children's Ministries Agency / BGMC

Let's look at the need for churches to invest in children's ministries. Dan Betzer says, "In my travels I have observed that many times the children's ministry was near the bottom of the totem pole in importance and finances."

Many times children's ministries is at the bottom of the churches' financial totem pole. When that happens, churches will find they are not attracting new young families. Or worse yet, they may be losing young families to the church that does invest in the children.

Young adults are the vibrant young blood that enter our churches, get involved, and become our leaders. Without them, many churches stagnate. God told us to "teach the children." God knew that investing in the children was the best way to perpetuate, grow, and expand the church. Children's ministry takes an investment.

Dan Betzer continues: "Put this ministry firmly in your budget. Our children's ministries is subsidized in our annual budget. Pastors truly tie their children's leaders' hands when they don't give them the funds they need."

He continues: "A growing congregation urgently needs a strong, Spirit-led children's pas-

tor (or well-trained laity). This is no place to scrimp. I urge pastors to find the very finest leadership available."

Leith Anderson writes: "In the 1950's, the fastest growing staff position was youth pastor. Today the fastest growing new staff position is the children's pastor, as more and more churches respond to this their biggest outreach and growth opportunity."



Not every church can afford a children's pastor, but every church can afford to train up and invest in children's leadership within the church. Some of our best children's pastors were laity whose senior pastor sent them to multiple training opportunities all around the country to create the best leaders they

could. Send your children's leadership to every training conference you possibly can. Fly them to conferences if necessary. Every dollar you spend to train your children's leaders will build the quality with which your church ministers to children.

The Senior Pastor and Children's Ministry

What is the importance of the senior pastor when it comes to children's ministry? A tremendous children's ministry begins with a senior pastor who truly wants to reach children and young families. The senior pastor dictates the value the people and the board place upon children's ministry. His vision for reaching children spreads to the whole congregation.

The senior pastor's vision should include investing in children outside the walls of the church. Deuteronomy 31:12,13 says, "Assemble the people—men, women, and children, and the aliens living in your towns so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children who do not know this law must hear it!"

God is talking about reaching the children of the unsaved people in your community. He is

saying that it is the church's responsibility to reach these kids. We *must* reach them!

The senior pastor is the key to the way the congregation responds and supports the children's ministry. Like no other ministry in the church, children's ministry is totally dependent upon a significant number of

volunteers to minister in classrooms every time the doors of the church are open.

It is not unique to have more volunteers involved in children's ministry than all other ministries of the church combined. In one church where I was the children's pastor, there were 480 adult volunteers in the whole church. Of these, 320 worked in

children's ministry. The senior pastor is the key to successfully encouraging every member of the adult congregation to get involved in ministry, especially children's ministry, since it requires such a vast number of people.

Questions For Further Study—

1. Brainstorm ways that you and your children's workers can raise the awareness of children's ministry in the eyes of your senior pastor and adult lay workers.
2. What lay personnel does your church have that can be trained as effective children's workers?
3. What training resources can you use to prepare workers for children's ministry in your church?



The 21st Century Church, part 4 of 4—

Discipleship Goals of the Children's Ministries Agency

by David Boyd, National Coordinator, Children's Ministries Agency / BGMC

The discipleship goals of the Children's Ministries Agency are based upon preparing children for the life they will lead as they grow. Children's ministry today meets the same needs that youth ministry used to. Leith Anderson agrees when he says: "Today's children's programs are starting to look like yesterday's youth programs." Today, grade-school age children are facing issues like smoking, drinking, drugs, sexual issues, persecution, as well as facing the possibilities of violence at school. Our children need to be radically sold out in their relationship with Jesus.

Our goals from the National Children's Ministries Agency is that every child will be so solidly grounded in God by the time that they enter the youth group they will never turn their back on Christ and will become the core with which youth pastors can impact the campuses of our nation.

The goal of the Children's Ministries Agency is to: "**Reach the Children...until He comes.**" Here are the eight qualities of spiritual character that we want every child to develop. We want them to be:

Powerful in Prayer

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

Baptized in the Holy Spirit

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

Radical in Worship

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

Mobilized in Service

We believe every child should be taught their value of service in God's kingdom through opportunities to exercise their talents and abilities as they minister to others.

Sacrificial in Giving

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

Active in Evangelism

We believe that every child should be willing to be a bold witness for Christ and to allow their life to be used to bring glory to God and salvation to others.

Knowledgeable in God's Word

We believe every child should be solidly knowledgeable of God's Word through systematic teachings by trained leaders using Pentecostal curriculums and resources.

Baptized in Water

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

Accomplishing These Goals

How do we accomplish these goals? The Assemblies of God has by far the most well-coordinated array of children's ministry programs of any denomination. In Sunday School, kids are taught every important doctrine of the Bible. It is here where brick upon brick we build the foundation of our children's spiritual faith. Sunday School's success is based upon a small ratio of teachers to students, where each teacher knows the child, and where the children ask question after question as their faith in Christ grows week by week.

Children's churches have become the proving ground of the faith of our kids. This is where they put into practice the true Pentecostal experience. Children lift their hands in worship, pray for the sick, receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, pray in tongues, respond to biblical preaching, and gather around the altar to seek God. These services are led by children's pastors, lay leaders, and gifted shepherds helping us

reach this next generation for Christ.

Royal Rangers and Missionettes are our arm into the community. Missionettes, with its new revised program, has literally exploded with the ability to disciple young girls into young ladies following the examples of biblical women. Royal Rangers is being revised, but even as it stands it is the strongest “Christian men mentoring boys” program in the world! In today’s society of single families and “fatherless homes,” men investing in boys and being an example to boys is priceless.

Couple these programs with Junior Bible Quiz (JBQ), which sinks God’s Word into the hearts of kids, and Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade (BGMC),

which teaches kids to care about the world, pray for the world, make faith promises to missions, and seek God’s call for their lives. Together the teachers, pastors, and leaders of our children’s ministry of the Assemblies of God are “Raising up a generation of kids who will live for God forever!”

Pastor, I implore you to invest in the children of your church. Support the children’s ministries financially. Invest in your leadership by training them. Insure that you have quality materials and equipment. Prepare to make the best impression you can for visiting families. Make sure the children attend Sunday School. Make sure they have their own quality service in kid’s

church. Give them the opportunity to be mentored on Wednesday nights through Royal Rangers and Missionettes. Insist that your church participates in BGMC and teaches your children about missions. Make your church a church where children are welcome, safe, and well cared for. Make your church a church that attracts young families.

When our children have developed the spiritual characteristics that we’ve mentioned, they will stand strong and bold for Jesus. We will be developing the pastors, missionaries, and spiritual leaders of tomorrow. Join with the National Children’s Ministries Agency as we **“Reach Kids...until He comes!”**

Questions For Further Study—

1. In what ways are you striving to instill in your children each of the 8 qualities of spiritual character?
2. Which of the 8 qualities do you stress most strongly in your ministry?
3. What steps can you take to place more emphasis on the remaining qualities?