



How Children's Ministry Helps Build Strong Local Churches

Written by Melissa Minter

A few weeks ago, I was sitting behind one of our middle school boys in a Sunday morning service. When the pastor asked for prayer requests, he mentioned the name of one of his friends. During praise and worship time, he had his hands lifted towards heaven. In another service, I noticed two of our middle school girls. We were singing some of the songs that they had learned as children in children's ministries. They were boldly doing the motions to the song in "big church." During the same service, some of the children began to smile with me as the worship leader led a song they also knew from children's church. With smiles on our faces (as if we all knew a secret that the other adults missed), we began worshiping through motions and movement. I realized that these children and middle school students were making a difference in our church. Without reservation, they were worshiping their God and serving as an example to others. Where had they learned this freedom of worship? It was in children's ministry!

Children's Ministry helps build strong local churches by helping to build strong Christians. Research has shown that most people come to accept Christ as children. In children's ministry, a child's faith is nurtured. In language and methods they can understand, our children learn Bible truths and spiritual disciplines, such as Bible study, fasting, and prayer. They also learn about their place in the body of Christ. At many churches, children are involved each year in visiting the older members of their congregation, raising money for home and world missions, and serving their churches as praise team members and ushers. Children are learning to serve as God's hands through their children's ministry.

Children's ministry also provides children with relationships. Strong local churches are places where people are connected to others. Without a personal connection, our local churches will not be strong. In children's ministry, children become more than someone's son, daughter, or grandchild. They are individuals. Each time they come to church, they should see a children's minister who knows their name, interests, strengths, and struggles. Although my children have attended the same church all of their lives, they are very shy with most of the adults. However, when they enter their Sunday school class, they seem to come alive. Their teacher has taken the time to invest in their lives, and they love her attention. Children's ministry provides a framework for children to build relationships with adults and other children.

Children's ministry often does things a bit differently than the traditional worship service. Strong churches are built upon solid traditions with a willingness to try new methods when God opens the door. Experiencing worship in different forms will teach our children to walk through these open doors. My church has recently completed a building project. We will be having our services in our new family life center until a permanent sanctuary is built. During this time of transition, I am certain that we will have to do things a bit differently. The children will embrace this new change and run, not walk, to take this opportunity God has given to us.

Ministry to children will always make a local church stronger. It will nurture strong Christians who are willing to serve God's kingdom. It will model to our children that relationships matter because we cannot serve God in isolation. It will teach our children to move through any open door God sends! Let children and children's ministry model these lessons in your local church as we all seek to grow stronger and love our God extravagantly and without reservation.