



Moving Kids from Me to Ministry

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I didn't want to do it. I wasn't sure it would work. I was wrong.

Last fall, our church leadership decided to set aside one Sunday morning to put our "Faith in Action." Each ministry was to find a way to put our faith in action instead of just worshiping within the four walls of our church. The youth group was having a free car wash. Others were visiting the nursing home. What could the children do? We finally settled on the idea of having the kids go door to door in the neighborhood passing out candy and sharing information about our church. I dreaded that Sunday for weeks. I do not enjoy talking to strangers. With grumbling in my heart, I left for church that morning. As the children entered the room, I began to feel their excitement. They couldn't wait to go door to door! While walking around the neighborhood, they were all begging to go to every house. I learned my lesson that day. Childhood is the time to move kids into ministry. I don't want to miss this window of opportunity.

While childhood is an important time to teach children to minister, we face some unique obstacles. Children enter the world as selfish individuals. "I" and "Me" are some of their favorite words. Our first responsibility in helping children move toward a ministry mindset is to help them fall in love with Jesus. When they become followers of Christ, He calls them to think of others first. Second, we must wage war on a culture that wants to steal our children. Children are told to think about their own happiness above all else. As part of making themselves feel good, children are encouraged to help their community. While the culture might encourage participation in service projects, service projects do not equal ministry. Anyone can temporarily give up time or money to help others. Ministry involves loving and helping others while doing everything possible to bring them closer to Jesus. We do not want our children just doing good deeds. We want them serving and sharing the message that Jesus changes lives.

As we strive to move children toward a ministry focus, it is important to remember four ideas.

- **Model** ministry. We cannot expect children to know how to minister to others unless we first model this in our own lives. If we complain about the effort involved in a church activity, we can expect no less than complaints from our children. However, if children see us ministering to others with joy, then they begin to see that ministry is a privilege.

- **Organize** opportunities for children to minister. Ministry does not always happen naturally for children. Give them responsibilities in church. Take them to the local nursing home to visit. Plan fundraising activities to help them send gifts to missionaries. The opportunities are endless. Seek God's guidance and get started!
- **Equip** children to minister. If we help children find ways to minister, but do not teach them the skills they need, then ministry becomes something to fear. They need to know how to speak politely, share their faith, and pray aloud for others. Always provide training to children when involving them in specific ministry tasks that require unique skills, such as working in the nursery, helping to clean the home of an elderly person, or singing in the praise team.
- **Value** the contributions of children. If we want children to have a ministry mindset, then we must value their efforts. Children are members of the body of Christ, and each part of the body is called to ministry. When we look at them as the church of tomorrow or as someone cute to put on stage, we do not value them as ministers of today.

When we help children move their focus off of themselves and onto others, we are helping them to serve their God. There is no greater privilege than to serve with children in ministry as we all bring joy to our heavenly Father. Jump through this window of opportunity and see what God can do through children!