



Involving Kids in Ministry

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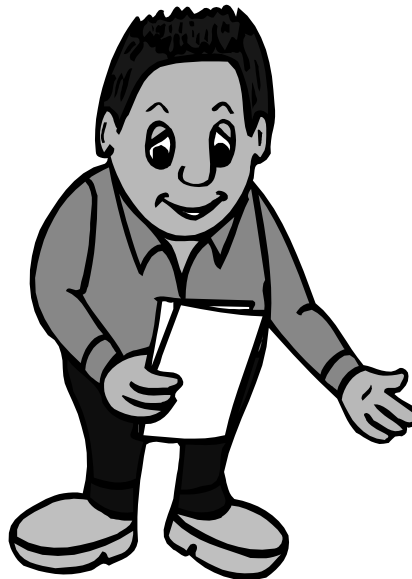
Long before many of us in children's ministry heard about *We Build People*, we learned the importance of helping children discover their natural and spiritual gifts and use them in ministry. After moving to Springfield, I was pleased to learn that this concept is now an integral part of our Assemblies of God discipleship program. Base three of the *We Build People* non-negotiable values is, "Every believer has unique gifts to be developed and used to strengthen the church." This, of course, includes children. Teachers and children's pastors play a vital role in this important process.

Involving children in ministry doesn't just happen automatically. Children need the permission and encouragement of adults to pursue their interests and discover their abilities. The church has been successful at this in some cases, but has been guilty, at times, of discouraging children from feeling a real part of church ministry.

Certainly, there is a training period, and a waiting time for some aspects of ministry. But if the time period seems unreachable, a child can feel discouraged about even trying. I'm forever grateful for parents who involved me in ministry as a child, and for a church that allowed me to assist in a pri-

mary class of boys when I was only 12 years old. I was insecure and lacked knowledge, but I had been challenged from the pulpit that even children could serve the Lord. God knew I needed that experience to discover I had the gift of teaching.

Sometimes I think we dismiss too quickly the example of Jesus discussing Scripture with the doctors of the law at age 12 (Luke 2:40-52). After all, we rea-



son, He was the Son of God. But Jesus showed by His example that a 12-year-old could be "strong in spirit, filled with wisdom" and be interested in spiritual matters. Let's not underestimate what God is doing in the lives of the boys and girls we teach. Here are some additional ideas on involving children in

ministry:

- ↳ Provide a variety of opportunities for children to be involved in service.
- ↳ Begin with small jobs so children will feel successful.
- ↳ Reserve jobs that require greater responsibility for older children.
- ↳ Help children discover their abilities and build their confidence.
- ↳ Show appreciation for effort. Don't give the impression that things have to be done perfectly. Allow children to participate in ministry while they are learning.
- ↳ Get to know each child. Talk to the child's parents to find out what their child is interested in.
- ↳ Allow children to participate in planning events and special activities.
- ↳ Teach children to respect others' talents and abilities, and to encourage and compliment each other.
- ↳ Provide good role models for the children to follow. Your staff should be an example of servanthood to the children.
- ↳ Give children meaningful tasks and responsibilities. Involve them in projects where they can learn the importance of faithfulness and responsibility.
- ↳ Help children understand they are the church of today as

well as the church of tomorrow.

↳Broaden their world.

Expand their vision. Help them see the needs of others and what they can do to help.

↳Establish a learning environment where children can be creative and are encouraged to contribute their ideas.

↳Teach children that serving begins at home with their own family.

↳Know the age characteristics of your students. This will help you have reasonable expectations.

↳Ask your pastor if the children can serve in the adult wor-

ship service on occasion. In a special service children can usher, share a testimony, sing, pray, present a drama skit, or puppet show. Children can also assist in serving as greeters, assisting with technical set up and helping to serve at church fellowship dinners.

Questions For Further Study—

1. What do children need in order to pursue their interests and discover their abilities?

2. List four ways that you can encourage children to become involved in ministry in your church.

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