

MINISTRY TO CHILDREN

Part 1

Welcome to our 5 minute Leadership Vlog! Today we look at Part 1 of *Ministry to Children* and why it's so important for understanding mission, for leadership development and church health.

City Mission + Children

Children have never been so much in the forefront as they presently are; we have child protection legislations, which govern our interactions with children and people practically worship their children, which, I think, has less to do with legislation and more to do with the fact that parents these days, generally, both have careers and so they are desperate for help in raising their children and forming their spirituality. As a Christian, you want to be in a church that backs you - not that replaces you - but backs you. It's critical for churches and christians in order to reach their communities and to be effective "on mission" to their city.

In addition to that, if you're not a believer and your children say, "please take me to church" you'll probably be rather astonished, at first, because one of the reasons (you and other) people might not go to church these days is because of an experience had in their younger days, and so they've said that they will never force their children to go to sunday school, like their mom and dads did.

Irresistible Church

When you can make Jesus irresistible to unchurched kids, they will drag their families along, and that's great for mission!

For a church to see children on fire for God and loving Him is really good for the overall church health. Children who are being released in the gifts of the Spirit and getting involved in bands, engaging in small group discussion times and dancing and worshipping and inviting their friends to church does something to the health of the church.

A Model for Ministry to Children

There are different models for ministering to children and I'm not here to say which one is better than the other, but in the vlogs to come we will give you our model for Children's Ministry.

There are those who believe that children should be seen and not heard. In other words, just take the kids off our hands, like a baby sitting facility.

Then there are others who believe that children ought to be in the service. I have preached at many churches where parents are taught how to put a mat on the floor at their feet with toys for the children that don't make a noise, a little snack to keep them going through the long-winded preach, and the theory behind this is that the children worship with you, that as parents, you teach them to model what you are modelling.

There are also others who say, let's have them in the service for just the worship and then send them out during the preaching, because they can cope with the worship but that old geyser who is gassing on and on is just going to make them resistant to the gospel, so let's get the gospel to them some other way.

There is also a viewpoint that believes that children can spiritually engage God as much as adults do. There should be times where children are able to come into the service with their parents, but we really want to make Jesus irresistible to children and to teach them how to worship passionately without being held back by (perhaps) conservative moms and dads.

Preach a gospel to them in a language they understand, with media they understand. Get them to sit in small groups and discuss things like you would in a connect group or home group, where they're able to talk with their peers and engage one another, while at the same time really having fun and letting their hair down - much of which moms and dads don't do!

The argument against this model is that you're splitting families. However, if I were to come visit you in your home, and bring my kids with me, you wouldn't make them sit at my feet and listen to the adult conversation the entire time. You would let them go play in the garden or you would encourage them to go play in the playroom. You would let them hang out with their peers and engage with their peers. Perhaps at lunch time you would call them in, to sit around the table with the family - and if the children refused and didn't want to join in at lunch time, then you would most likely have a dysfunctional family - but I believe that if children never play together on their own, a family is going to have something missing.

That's the model that we're going to share with you over the next few vlogs - how we aim to make Jesus utterly irresistible to children within the context of a local church. I trust that it will be useful to you in growing your church, reaching your community, developing your children for this great and magnificent harvest.

Jesus had a very soft spot for children. He said, "what you do for the least of these, you've done to me. If you welcome one of these, you've welcomed me." In other words, one thing we can be certain of on a Sunday is that where children are being welcomed, Jesus pitches up.