



CELEBRATE *the* CHILD: Ministry to Families = Ministry to Kids

NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 Issue 6

June 1999

*Children's Ministry Newsletter is published monthly by Children's Ministries of the Church of God of Prophecy,
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Ministry Direction



This issue of the Children's Ministry Newsletter is dedicated to the third of five declarations made in the CELEBRATE THE CHILD initiative—

◆ Any viable ministry with children must involve the family.

In his book, HOW TO SHEPHERD CHILDREN IN A WORLD FULL OF WOLVES, Herb Owen lists "Building Strong Families" as a goal of ministry to children? Why?

❖ In the divine order, parents are to be the primary Christian educators of children. We find this stated in both the Old and New Testaments (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Ephesians 6:4).

❖ In reality, parents are the primary influence on their children—for better or worse. Walt Mueller, president of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, says, "After twenty-two years in youth ministry, one truth grows more obvious to me every year: Kids blossom into mature adults who are strikingly like their parents. A youth worker's influence on a teenager's spiritual growth is important, but limited—and it's certainly less than a parent's influence."

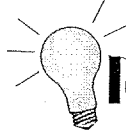
What can you do to build strong families and thus minister to the kids of your congregation? Herb Owen offers these suggestions:

- Get to know the families of your children.
- Train parents to be good parents and to share their faith with their children.
- Become a resource center of help to families.
- Go after dads.

We need to treat children's ministry as a whole.

Children's Ministry is family ministry."

Darrell Fraley, Children's Pastor



Ideas You Can Use!

Meet The Needs of Families . . .

"The primary need of parents is not for information about how to parent. It is for that which meets their own personal needs"

Lawrence O. Richards,
A Theology of Children's Ministry.

★ One local congregation gutted the inside of an old school bus then filled the bus with clothing, food, and household items. The bus manned by loving volunteers goes out once a month into impoverished areas of the community. The families of the neighborhood are invited to "shop" for needed items from the bus.

★ Enlist the help of "experts" in your local congregation to help poor and single-parent families with home repairs, lawn maintenance, car repair, etc.



★ Provide childcare before and after school for working parents. Provide a mother's day out once a week or month for stay-at-home moms of infants and preschoolers. Or, if it is not possible for your congregation to provide organized childcare, ask responsible adults to be on-call on specified weeks to provide any needed babysitting.

★ Encourage mentoring relationships between young parents and older parents.

★ Using college student volunteers, a local ministry provides tutoring one day a week to the children of a low-income neighborhood. The college students help individual children with homework and encourage them to do their best. At the end of each school year, an awards banquet is held for the children who have made the honor roll that year. Parents are definitely invited!

★Many families cannot afford to hire a coach or teacher to guide the development of their child's special giftings in areas such as music, art, individual sports. But there are probably people in your congregation who could volunteer their services. Match these people up with willing kids and grateful parents.

★Provide classes on budgeting, cooking, sewing, simple car repair, etc. to parents. Not only will it help them in managing their household but it will also provide an opportunity for them to develop relationships with others in your congregation.

Train Parents to Shape Their Children's Faith . . .

"The church needs to shift away from its focus on imparting knowledge to people at church to training parents to be Christian educators in their own homes."

Ben Freudenburg,
The Family Friendly Church

★Form support groups for parents whose children are at various stages of development.

★Develop a family resource library. Gather used or new materials from the congregation. Purchase materials from Christian bookstores or Christian book distributors who will give a discount to church libraries. Stock materials such as parenting books, family devotion books, children's Bible storybooks, Christian family videos, etc.

★Plan entertaining events for the entire family such as: family camp, day trips to historical or recreational sites, family fun nights at the church, a family bake-off, box-car derby or other competition that would involve the whole family. Conclude these events with a time when each family huddles together for TAPs (talk and prayer).

★Instead of separating the family into various age groups for Sunday School, have family Sunday School at regular intervals throughout the year. Each Sunday school class would be made up of several families. Each family would be responsible for preparing and

presenting a portion of the lesson. (Be sure to include plenty of hands-on learning experiences and discussion times.) Provide a take-home family devotion that will help parents follow-up on the Bible lesson studied.

★Make good use of take-home materials and parent newsletters that are part of your curriculum. Have a parent meeting to discuss learning objectives for each quarter. Introduce take-home materials and give ideas on how parents can use these materials to reinforce the lessons learned in children's ministry.

★Involve families in service projects: mission trips, lawn maintenance for the elderly, preparing and serving food to the homeless, planning and presenting a program to a nursing home or hospital ward, manning a clothes closet, etc.

Involve the Total Church in Ministry to Family and Children . . .

A 1986 study by Harvard Economist Richard Freeman showed that among urban black youth, church attendance was a better predictor of who would escape drugs and crime than any other factor. Your local church has power to impact the lives of children and families.

Here's a few ways to get everyone involved in family ministry.

★Organize prayer support. Enlist elderly couples to pray for a specific family daily. Name a "Family or Families of the Week." Encourage the entire church to pray each day throughout the week for that family and its needs.

★Provide a system to consistently mentor the children of your church. Implement a program such as "Adopt-a-Child" that allows each child to receive encouragement, learn from a positive role model and develop a loving relationship with another adult in the congregation.

★Avoid overscheduling.

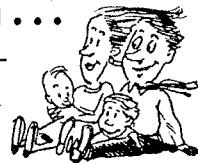
★Emphasize the rituals of your church. Baptism, the celebration of Christian holidays, communion, feet washing, church membership are great opportunities to

involve the family. If these events are well-planned, families will receive a greater sense of belonging to the local body and a greater understanding of the foundational principles of their faith.

★Provide financing needed to minister to families and their children.

Home Faith Month . . .

Home Month is an opportunity for families of all ages and stages to focus on developing faith in the home setting.



When families sign up to participate in the Home Month they receive a packet of faith-development ideas that can be used in the home. The packet contains seven cards—playing together, praying together, reading Scripture, telling faith stories, managing our home, serving one another, and memorizing Scripture. Each card contains at least seven ideas that family members can do.

The plan encourages each family to do one activity the first week; one activity from each of two cards the second week, one activity from each of three cards the third week, and one activity from each of four cards the final week.

Each Sunday, those families involved in the Home Month can join a "Home Huddle" group for thirty minutes prior to evening worship. The group shares what they are doing, encourages one another and prays together.

(This family ministry idea was adapted from the book, *The Family Friendly Church* by Ben Freudenburg with Rick Lawrence.)



Resource Review

Celebrate the Child! Celebrate the Family!

The 1999 Children's Day program guide is a 24-page booklet crammed full of ideas for promotion, worker appreciation, family involvement, and ministry to children. The program guide offers a varied menu of ideas that will allow you to pick the activities best suited to your congregation. This booklet is available NOW at only \$5.00 including shipping and handling.

Only a limited supply of the program guides are available so send your request and check or money order today to: Children's Ministries, PO Box 2910, Cleveland, TN 37320-2910; 423-559-5209, phone; 423-559-5202, fax.