

# INTRODUCTION

Many of us believe that children are our future. Children are the church's future. Therefore, the church, parents, and teachers have the responsibility to nurture and train them to become strong *future* members and leaders. However, are we merely waiting for the future? How about the present? Should we not begin our training now instead of pressing the *Pause* button on children?



*“Let the little children come...”*

In fact, research shows the urgency of investing our time, effort, and money in children right now rather than at some future time. The recent Barna Research Group<sup>1</sup> reports that 32 percent of those who made a decision to accept Jesus do so between the ages of 5 and 12; 4 percent for those in the 13-18 age range; and 6 percent for people 19 or older. In other words, if people do not accept Jesus as their Savior before they reach their teenage years, the chance of accepting Him later is very slim.

The importance of engaging children in this process of decision-making in their formative years is crucial to building a strong church today. We believe that building tomorrow's church begins with today's children!

Therefore, this handbook serves as a training manual to equip Children's Ministries directors and leaders on the division, union, conference, and mission levels of the church in their ministry to children. It contains ideas, suggestions, and resources for developing and nurturing the faith of children and discipling them to become spiritual champions.

However, this resource is not limited, by all means, for directors only, but it is also a useful tool for anyone who have a passion for children and who are involved with God in shaping the spiritual destinies of children. More copies of this handbook can be obtained from the General Conference Children's Ministries Department.

<sup>1</sup>Barna, George. *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2003.

# THE PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

## Our Philosophy

Children's Ministries seeks to develop the faith of children ages birth to 14. While Sabbath School provides for religious education once a week, Children's Ministries looks at the whole child and seeks to provide multiple ministries that will lead children to Jesus and disciple them in their daily walk with Him.



The Bible makes it very clear that children are very special to God. If you examine what the Bible says about children, you will notice a great number of perspectives:<sup>2</sup>

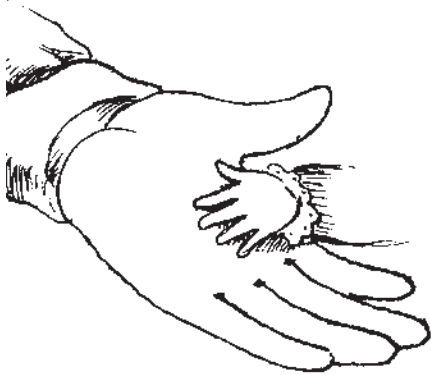
- ☺ ***Children are a gift from God.*** He gives children to parents as a special sign of love and personal fulfillment (Deut. 7:13; Ps. 127:3).
- ☺ ***Children are desirable.*** From Creation, God has instructed us to bear children (Gen. 9:7; Deut. 6:3).
- ☺ ***Children bring joy and blessings to adults.*** God provides many benefits to parents through parenting their children (Num. 5:28; Deut. 28:4, 11).
- ☺ ***Children need to be taught how to develop a relationship with God.*** One of our greatest challenges is to pass on our beliefs and understanding of God to our children (Exod. 12:26, 37; Deut. 6:1-7; Prov. 22:6).
- ☺ ***Children are so valuable to God that He commands us to protect them.*** Parents are to ensure the spiritual and physical security of their children (1 Sam. 20:42; Ezra 8:21).
- ☺ ***God loves children enough to ensure that they receive discipline.*** (Prov. 3:11, 12; 13:24; 19:18; Eph. 6:4).
- ☺ ***God enjoys the nature and personality of children and asks adults to learn from them.*** Scripture identifies attributes such as sincerity, humility, simplicity, and trusting as qualities found in children, and God treasures these characteristics (Matt. 18:3; 19:14; Phil. 2:15).

If children matter this much to God, then they should matter as much to us, too. It is vital that we take children seriously as the heritage of the Lord, entrusted to us for training and discipling that they will lead the church into the future.

Jesus' great commission is: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV). Surely, this includes making disciples of children and leading them to make a personal commitment to Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> Barna, George. *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2003.

### Our Mission



*The mission of the Children's Ministries Department is to nurture children into a loving, serving relationship with Jesus. We seek to fulfill this mission by developing:*

**Grace-oriented ministries,** in which all children will experience the unconditional love of Jesus, find assurance of acceptance and forgiveness, and make a commitment to Him.

**Inclusive ministries,** in which the volunteers who minister and the children to whom they minister will be valued and involved regardless of race, color, language, gender, age, abilities, or socio-economic circumstances.

**Leadership ministries,** in which volunteers are empowered, trained, and equipped for effective ministry to children.

**Service-oriented ministries,** in which children are given opportunity for hands-on service to people in their neighborhood or city, thus, establish a pattern of outreach to others that may well continue through life.

**Cooperative ministries,** in which the department works with other ministries, such as Family Ministries, Sabbath School, Stewardship, and others to further our shared goals.

**Safe ministries,** whereby our churches: a) choose volunteers with high spiritual and moral backgrounds; and, b) adopt safeguards to protect children from physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse and the church from liability.

**Evangelistic ministries,** in which children who are not enfolded in the church will be introduced to the love of Jesus through outreach programs such as: Vacation Bible Schools, children's Branch Sabbath Schools, Neighborhood Bible Clubs, and Story Hours.