

THE CHURCH IN IRVINE — CHILDREN'S WORK

INTRODUCTION

- OUR VISION:** The children's work is to cultivate and nurture our next generation. It should not simply be babysitting in order for the saints to come to the meetings. It is also not merely a Sunday school work to educate our children like in a school. On the positive side, the children's work aims to gain the neighborhood children with their families for the church. From these we can see that the children's work is greatly related to the growth of the church.
- OUR GOAL:** The goal of the children's work is to build children up in their humanity to be proper human beings. Our emphasis is to cultivate a proper humanity in the children rather than teach them with premature knowledge. Gradually, we can convey to them a deep impression that there is a God in the universe, that man fell and committed sin, and that the Lord Jesus is our Savior. Eventually we can help them to receive the Lord and be saved in a definite way.
- OUR PERSON:** In the church the most important thing is the person; the person is the way, and the person is the Lord's work. In whatever a person does, the most important thing is to have a heart. We must let God open our eyes to see the preciousness of the children and their importance in God's hands. When we see the importance and value of a certain matter, then spontaneously we have a heart for it. If you want to do this work, you must like the children, care for them, and be concerned about their affairs; this may be considered the minimum "capital" required for the children's work.
- OUR SCOPE:** When we speak of the children's work, we are referring to children who have not graduated from elementary school but are more than five years old. The place to carry out the children's work should not be limited to Lord's Day morning. A normal, proper and healthy children's work begins in the home with their parents and family; it can also be carried out during the week in the homes and neighborhoods of the saints.
- OUR LESSONS:** The lesson materials are not composed in full; they are simply guidelines. Saints who are burdened for the children should come together regularly to pray, fellowship and consider how to impart the key point(s) from the lesson.

The lessons have been prepared for 3 age groups (levels):

- (1) ELEMENTARY – 4-6 years old
- (2) INTERMEDIATE – 7-9 years old
- (3) ADVANCE – 10-12 years old

The material for the elementary level should be entirely on the child's perspective. Bible stories are not necessary at this level. Gradually as we proceed to the intermediate and advanced levels, we can give the children a little more Bible knowledge.

We should simply **impress the children with the facts in the Bible** and give them a general knowledge of the truth **without giving them too much doctrine**. For the children in the advanced group the gospel can be incorporated into the lesson, where and when appropriate.

The goal of the lessons is that the children would learn: 1) To be deeply impressed that there is God and to know who God is, 2) to see God in creation, and 3) the preciousness of man (humanity) in God's creation, showing that man is different from the animals, 4) what is proper humanity, 5) what is proper character, and, 6) to know the law (intermediate and advanced age group).

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PREPARATION BEFORE THE CHILDREN'S MEETING

Introduction: The lesson materials were not prepared as detailed lesson plans but as a starting point for serving ones to fellowship and develop. Each lesson needs to be developed in a way that can be applied to the children in your district. Every week the serving ones need to meet together for at least thirty (30) minutes to:

- Pray together for the children and the children's meeting time.
- Fellowship about the children (condition, behavior, special needs, capacity).
- Meet with the serving ones from the previous Lord's Day to fellowship what occurred during the children's meeting that day.
- Read and pray over the verses and lesson material. (Read all three levels and review the previous levels for intermediate and advanced groups, if applicable.)
- Fellowship about how to apply the lesson. Consider your audience and use appropriate examples or stories to help the children understand the lesson. It is good to use real life examples that relate to the children. It may not be necessary to use a bible story every week.
- Select songs – they do not need to relate to the lesson but should be age appropriate.
- Prepare crafts.
- Prepare snacks – no sugary snacks or major allergy offenders like peanuts or juices or snacks with food dyes, etc. Cut up fruits with water are always good options.
- Plan some activities and games.

PRESENTATION OF THE LESSON

Introduction: **It is not necessary to have different age groups in separate classrooms** but it is necessary to give the lesson to different age groups separately or at different times. One group of children might do the craft or play while another group of children gets their lesson.

- It is better for the lesson to be short than long. The following are suggested lengths for the lessons: Elementary – 10 minutes, Intermediate – 15 minutes, Advanced – 20 minutes.

- When giving the lesson be personal, interesting, and informal. Consider how to give the lesson without the classroom format (e.g. while taking a nature walk, while eating a snack). Do your best to engage the children. Make the lesson interactive where children are able to answer questions or express their thoughts.
- We should present the lessons in a very practical way, using many illustrations, examples and testimonies that are applicable to their daily life. Visuals can also help especially with the younger kids. Some useful visual aids are: white boards, pictures, and objects related to the lesson. Skits or plays should not be used to give a lesson.
- Stories, especially real life stories, are an excellent way to convey the lesson. Serving ones are encouraged to include a story, even one from their own experience, in the lesson. Please be careful not to tell a story which is a fairytale, fable or folklore or that includes: dragons, sorcery, or themes related to Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day or Halloween.
- It is important to bear in mind that the Lord has His own timing for each child's personal experience of Him as their Savior and life. Our burden is to build them up, primarily in their humanity, to be proper human beings and by gradually depositing the Word into the children's heart, the Lord, in His timing, could touch their conscience. We should keep sowing the Word each week until we see the Spirit convicting their hearts. We must not be too quick to lead them to salvation or to teach them about spiritual life experiences and life practices. We should wait until they are ready. To give anything prematurely to the children could spoil their personal experience of the Lord's salvation and damage them.
- We should not give the children premature knowledge about the subjective experiences of life. For example, we should not tell the children about bearing the cross, dealing with the self, or that they need to follow the sense of life.
- We should not give the children too much doctrines or teachings. Some examples of too much doctrine are 1) to give them the spiritual interpretations of the father, son, robe, ring, fatted calf when telling them the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, and 2) to tell them God is our rock because most children will understand that literally.
- We should not give the children religious concepts and thoughts. For example, God loves the good people and is angry with the bad people; or that people go to heaven when they die.
- We should avoid emphasizing the exercise of their spirit using life practices (e.g. calling on the Lord, pray-reading His word) until the children are regenerated, scaring them with details about God's judgment and the lake of fire, and bringing up holidays and festivals that are earthly and even pagan (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Valentine's Day).

Be a pattern to the children of proper humanity and one who believes in God and loves God. "...for the sake of the church life, we need to have a proper human living in this present age." (Footnote: Ephesians 6:1¹)