

Posterity will serve Him;
It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation.
They will come and will declare His righteousness
To a people who will be born, that He has performed it.
Ps 22:30-31

Vision, Philosophy & Theology

A Training Manual For Children's Ministry Workers



EXALTING CHRIST PUBLISHING

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A Vision for Ministry to Children and Their Parents

Thank you for considering serving the Lord Jesus and declaring His glory to the next generation. God is determined to glorify Himself through His Son in every generation. This is what drives our passion for ministry to parents and children. “To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus *to all generations* forever and ever. Amen” (Eph 3:21).¹ We have a responsibility to tell the next generation. “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts” (Ps 145:4). What an awesome privilege we have to serve the Lord in this way.

The purpose of this manual is to give you an overview of our Children’s Ministries at Community Bible Church. It is our prayer that as you invest the time in reading these pages, you will catch the vision and join with us in the spreading of the glory of Christ in the generations to come.

Section

1

A Theology and Philosophy of Ministry to Children and Their Parents

The purpose of this section is to give you an understanding of the theological and philosophical convictions which shape Community Bible Church’s ministry to parents and children. There are certain foundational principles that underlie our theology of ministry to children. The first is understanding the unifying goal in all that God does.

God does all things for the praise of His glory (Num 14:15-16; Ps 19:1; 106:7-8; 1 Cor 10:31; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Rev 21:23). Redemption and salvation are not God’s ultimate goal. These He performs for the sake of something greater, which is to glorify Himself (Eph 1:3-14). Our ministries therefore cannot be man-centered. Our objective is to glorify God and exalt Him.

How do we glorify God in our ministries? To do this, we need to know what God glories in. God takes pleasure in many things, but His greatest delight is His Son.

God takes great pleasure in glorifying His Son (Matt 12:18; 17:2, 5; John 5:22-23; 17:5; Eph 1:10, 20; Phil 2:9). The infinite happiness of the Father consists in the enjoyment of His Son and spreading His glory.² Thus the central focus of our ministry is to glorify God by exalting Christ and

¹ All Scripture quotations are taken from the *Updated New American Standard Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995).

² John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Books, 1996), 31.

spreading His glory to all peoples, for this is the great business of God (Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8; Rev 5:9).

One of the ways we exalt Christ is by recognizing the sufficiency of Christ through His word for life and godliness. This leads us to a third foundational principle.

The sufficiency of Christ through His word (Ps 119:160; Matt 4:4, 7, 10; 5:18; John 17:17; 2 Tim 3:15-17). The Bible is the foundation upon which our faith rests. A correct view of Scripture undergirds everything we do and believe. If we go wrong here, everything else crumbles.

We believe the Bible comes from God Himself (it is God-breathed), and that it is His inerrant word to His people (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, it is our final authority for life and ministry. We believe the Scriptures are entirely sufficient as Christ's means (through His Spirit and His people) by which He accomplishes both the salvation and the transformation of His people. The Scriptures give wisdom for salvation (2 Tim 3:15); not only in initial conversion, but also for living life in a way that pleases God. They make the man of God "adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17). Therefore our ministry to children will be centered on teaching the word of God.

The mission Christ sent us to accomplish. A fourth foundational principle is understanding what our mission is. What are we here to accomplish? In other words, what does the Scripture say about how we glorify God and exalt His Son in the world? We do this by fulfilling the mission Christ sent us to accomplish. "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). Jesus was sent by the Father into the world to save the world (John 3:17). We are sent by Jesus on the same mission: to save the world.

We have the message of salvation, and we know a person who is able to save them. We go as Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20). This is done by preaching the gospel (Luke 24:46-49), and making disciples (Matt 28:18-20). Clearly this will be a central focus of our children's ministries.

The significance of the local church. Christ works through His church to accomplish His mission and glorify Himself. We see the church's significance in this: it is what Jesus purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28); it is what Christ loves, for He laid down His life for her (Eph 5:25); it is His household (1 Tim 3:15); it is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim 3:15); and it is what He is building (Matt 16:18).

There is a certainty that the church will be built. Jesus declares, "I will build My church," and there is no power strong enough to stop Him. This means that the most momentous work going on in the world today is Christ working through the local church. We must love and cherish the church as much as Christ does and understand that this is where He is doing His primary work today.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes to bear witness of Christ (John 15:26). He was sent into the world to glorify Christ (John 16:14). This is His supreme objective. The Spirit works through the means Christ has determined to build His church. For example, Jesus promised His presence (through the Spirit) when we make disciples (Matt 28:20). Jesus promises His power (through the Spirit) as we witness (Acts 1:8). The Spirit works through the preaching of the word

(John 16:7-11; 1 Cor 2:1-5). He works through prayer (Rom 8:26-27), and the use of our spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7-11). Therefore, we must rely on the Spirit if we are going to accomplish the work Christ wants us to do.

These are the foundational principles that undergird our theology and ministry to children. We must evaluate all that we do by them. Does it glorify God? Does it exalt the Lord Jesus? Is it rooted in Scripture? Does it accomplish our mission? Is it done through the church? Is it done in the power of the Spirit?

A Theology of Ministry to Children

In this section we want to look at what the Bible teaches about children and its implications for the family and the church.

God's View of Children

Children are a gift of the Lord (Ps 127:3). Our children are not our own; they belong to God. They are on loan to us for a season. They are not ours to keep, but to raise in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4).

Children are God's loving reward to parents (Ps 127:3). God does not give us children because we deserve them or because we have earned them. He gives us children out of His kindness and love. Thus we want to affirm forcefully that children are a blessing freely given by God to parents.

Children are created in God's image (Gen 1:27). Only man was created in God's image and after God's likeness. Nothing else is said to have been created like this, which shows the high position and standing that man has (which includes our children). Therefore we stand firmly against the cultural trend of cheapening and dishonoring human life. The world attempts to convince parents that if their baby is not exactly as they want, then it is okay to discard it like a piece of refuse. God says your baby is made in His image. He is a person, with a soul, who is a gift from God. He is valuable in God's sight.

Human life, from its earliest pre-born form in the womb until death, is the unique work of God and has value in reflecting God. Man is unique in that only man has the capacity to consciously know, enjoy, and glorify God. The value of human life is precisely its awesome potential to reflect the glory of God through faith (Rom 4:20), and God-centered good deeds (Matt 5:16).³

³ Council of Elders, Bethlehem Baptist Church, "For the Joy of the Next Generation: A Vision for Ministry to Children and Their Parents," (Bethlehem Baptist Church, 1992, revised 1999), 3, available <<http://www.hopeingod.org/resources/images/1245.pdf>> (23 July 2009).

Children are fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps 139:13-16). The Bible teaches that already in the womb God is knitting together a human person. “You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb” (Ps 139:13). Children do not happen by chance. God is responsible for the formation of our children. We thus value children before they are born. Abortion on demand reflects the devaluing of human life. The truth of Scripture is that God’s image is not to be snuffed out simply because that image dwells in a mother’s womb or an incubator.

The organization of the body infinitely surpasses in skill and design the most complicated piece of machinery developed or even conceived by human imagination. This leads to worship: “I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well” (Ps 139:14). A proper view of the works of God ends in wonder. It ends in glorifying God, giving praise for His wisdom and might.

Children must be valued as much as any other age group. If we are to honor God in our ministry to children then we must guard our hearts from having unbiblical thoughts about children. The disciples of Jesus fell into this trap. When some parents attempted to bring their children to Jesus, “the disciples rebuked them” (Mark 10:13). These were godly men who were lovers of Christ, and who were being personally trained by Him to lead His church. Yet when it came to children, they had a wrong view, which suggests it is common to have an unbiblical view of children.

The disciples possibly responded this way because of their zeal for Jesus. They must have thought that Jesus, of all people, was too important for children. Jesus the great rabbi did not want to be seen as a mere teacher of infants. He was engaged in a much greater work. He was busy preaching, instructing the multitudes, and healing the sick. Surely He did not have time for children, nor did He want to be disturbed by them. Thus in their zeal to protect Jesus from such insignificant things, the disciples rebuked the parents for bringing their children to Him.

There are only a few examples in Scripture of Jesus getting angry. This was one of those occasions. Jesus “was indignant” with the disciples and rebuked them (Mark 10:14). This was a serious offense because it dishonored Christ. They made Jesus appear as if He were too exalted for such trivial people. They were wrong on two accounts: in their assessment of Christ, and in their appraisal of children.

Jesus warmly welcomes children. He took them in His arms and began blessing them (Mark 10:16). Children are not insignificant. They need a Savior just as much as adults do. And think of their potential use in the kingdom if Christ saves them while they are young: they have perhaps fifty to sixty or more years of service ahead of them for the glory of Christ. We must not undermine the value of children.

Christ commanded His disciples, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them” (Mark 10:14). Anything done to hinder a child from coming to Christ angers our Lord. His heart is to welcome the children. He wants them to come. This is the heart we are to have toward children.

The Nature of Children

Children have a sinful nature. The Bible clearly teaches that all persons come into the world with a corrupt, sinful nature inherited from Adam (Rom 5:12-19). A child's nature is perverse and sinful throughout. This corruption extends to every part of the child. A child's understanding is darkened (Eph 4:18), his mind is at enmity with God (Rom 8:7), his will to act is enslaved to his darkened understanding and rebellious mind, his heart is corrupt (cf Gen 8:21; Eze 36:26; Jer 17:9), his emotions are perverted, his affections naturally gravitate to that which is evil (cf John 3:19-20), his conscience is untrustworthy, and his body is subject to mortality. We are all by nature born spiritually dead (Eph 2:1), are "children of wrath" (Eph 2:3), and are headed for destruction unless new birth, repentance and faith unite us to Christ, whose death covers the guilt of all our sin if we belong to Him (Rom 3:23-25; Tit 3:3-7; 1 Pet 1:3).

Though all persons come into the world with a sinful nature, the value of children as persons created in the image of God is not forfeited in this life. The image of God is defaced but not destroyed (cf. Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). Men are not mere animals even in their worst sin. There remains until death the potential for salvation and transformation into the moral likeness of Christ to the glory of God (John 3:3-8; Eph 2:5-10; 4:24).

Thus, we believe in the wonderful potential of children to become men or women whose lives are immensely significant because they can bring glory to God and great good to their fellow human beings. We also believe in the power of God to change children so that they become vessels for His use even while they are still children.⁴ But this will not happen unless they are born of God (John 3:3-6; Eph 2:3). Conversion to faith in Christ is indispensable for a life of true and lasting significance. Only Christ can set them free from the guilt and bondage of sin. Therefore the central focus of parenting and of children's ministries must be on the gospel.

Children are immature. In addition to sharing the fallen, sinful nature that all humans have, children are less developed in their physical, intellectual, and emotional capacities than adults are. Some of the marks of immaturity are brought out in the following passages of Scripture:

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. (1 Cor 13:11)

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. (1 Cor 14:20)

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming. (Eph 4:14)

⁴ Council of Elders, Bethlehem Baptist Church, 4.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. (Heb 5:12-13)

These verses teach that children are immature. They are growing in their ability to think, reason, and make moral judgments about what is good and bad, true and false. Because of their immaturity they are easily misled and swayed by cunning and deceit. Therefore, we must be careful to protect them from false teachers and false teaching. Those who teach our children must understand the word of God so they do not cause one of these little ones who believe in Jesus to stumble (cf. Matt 18:6).

The point of these verses is not to belittle children, but to warn adults not to be like children in ways that are meant to be left behind in childhood. Children are not to be criticized for their immaturity, but lovingly and patiently nurtured toward mature adulthood.

Children are dependent. Jesus “called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, ‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’” (Matt 18:2-4). Jesus is not saying that children are sinless. He is saying they are helpless, needy, and utterly dependent on their parents for what they need. We must become like this to enter the kingdom: recognizing our utter helplessness and total dependency on God to enter in. Children also have a natural humility in that they do not make pretenses of self-sufficiency. They accept their limitations and are happy to depend on their parents for what they need. They are models of happy trust in the protection and provision of their parents.⁵ They are a picture for us of how we are to rely on our heavenly Father for what we need.

The Responsibility of Parents Toward Their Children

All of the biblical truths about the nature of children constitute the foundation upon which we must build our attitudes and actions toward children and children’s ministries. We love our children and treasure them as wonderful gifts from our heavenly Father. Our desire is to reach them with the gospel.

The Bible consistently and explicitly lays upon parents the primary responsibility for teaching and modeling God’s truths to children. Parents must clearly understand their role so that the biblical responsibility God has given them is not ignored and laid on the church. The Lord obviously is working through the church to reach the next generation, so we need to see the connection between the church and family. But the point here is that far too often parents rely on the church to do what God has called them to do. The church is not a replacement of parents. Parents have a responsibility before God to reach their children with the gospel.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that

⁵ Council of Elders, Bethlehem Baptist Church, 5.

you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:1-4)

This is the one command in Scripture that is specifically addressed to children. Thus you will always know the spiritual temperature of your child by this command. You will know how they are doing spiritually, for this is what God requires of them.

Children are commanded to obey their parents. Both parents therefore have authority to teach and guide their children. It is important that parents function as a team and present a united front to their children when the standards of the home are in question.

Paul, however, specifically singles out fathers because God expects them to take the primary responsibility to bring up their children. They are the head of their home and are ultimately answerable to God for what goes on there. Fathers need to take their responsibility seriously, for God does.

When Paul addresses the fathers, he is issuing them a command. God is not giving them some friendly advice. He is commanding and instructing them how to raise the children He has loaned them. Paul's command is in the active voice, not in the passive. If it was passive it would sound something like, "you children be brought up." Instead of saying this, he writes, "Fathers, **you** bring them up." Fathers, do not be passive about this; do not abdicate your role. Yet this is exactly what many fathers have done. They let the school, daycare, grandparents, or the church bring up their children. But others are not responsible for raising their children; they are. They cannot be passive about their parenting. It could result in disastrous consequences for their children. Unfortunately, there are biblical examples of this: Eli (1 Sam 2) and David (2 Sam 13-18). Fathers must be active in bringing up their children.

We see many exhortations to this in the Scriptures.

The example of Abraham. Abraham was a man who lived by faith, a man we are to model (cf. Jas 2:21-23). Here is what God said about Abraham. "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him" (Gen 18:19). One of the purposes of God in choosing Abraham—His election of him and His saving him—was that he would teach his children and household to keep the way of the Lord. Abraham had a responsibility to train his family to follow God. We have the same responsibility. The family, and fathers in particular, are God's primary instrument in reaching the next generation.

An example from the Psalms

Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. (Ps 78:1-4)

God wants us to tell the generation to come the praises of the Lord, His strength and the wondrous works that He has done. There is an implication here that you know the praises of the Lord; you have experienced His strength and wondrous works in your life, and therefore, you have something you can tell. If you have experienced the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, then you can tell the generation to come the praises of the Lord. If you have known His power in delivering you from your bondage then you can tell of His strength to the generation to come. If you have been forgiven of your sins, if He has given you peace beyond comprehension and fullness of joy, then you can tell the generation to come about His wondrous works that He has done.

If you have experienced these things, not only do you have something to say, you cannot wait to tell them. The psalmist says, “We will not conceal them from their children” (Ps 78:4). We cannot keep this to ourselves. We have to let our children know the great things God has done for us in Christ.

The psalmist explains what God did: “For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children” (Ps 78:5-6). The psalmist is referring back to when God gave the law through Moses. The author is simply reminding his generation that nothing has changed. God gave His word to His people—the fathers—so they would teach it to their children, with the purpose that the generation to come might know God and the mighty things He has done (Ps 78:6).

So God’s design is that fathers would pass on to their children these great and glorious truths about Himself, even to the children who have yet to be born. God is looking ahead. He tells us that He saved us so we can tell our children, so they may arise and tell their children about this mighty loving God who saves sinners and who pardons all their iniquities through Jesus Christ.

The example of Israel. Israel, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, was about to enter Canaan, the promised land. It was a land full of pagans; a land full of sin and idolatry. It was a culture much like ours. How would they and their children survive in a culture like this? Moses tells them:

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you. That you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. (Deut 6:1-2)

God gave Moses statutes and then commanded him to teach the people. The purpose and goal of this was that the people would obey God, and fear Him and keep His commandments. God then expected the adults to teach their sons and grandsons so they too would fear the Lord and keep His commandments so they would be blessed.

Moses elaborates further on how they were to do this.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. (Deut 6:5-7)

Here we have the great command of the Bible: love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. One of the evidences of loving God with all your heart is that His word is on your heart (Deut 6:6). They were to own it, believe it, and practice it. Then, from this heart overflow, they were to teach God's word diligently to their sons (Deut 6:7). It had to be on their heart first. When God grips your heart with the truth about His Son, you cannot keep silent. You have to tell others about what you have seen and heard. His passion becomes your passion. And we have seen that God's passion is to spread His glory to the coming generations.

This point is utterly crucial. What parents end up teaching their children is what they—the parents—treasure and love. If you love God with all your heart, then you will seek to instill that love in your children in every situation that arises. You will teach your sons diligently. You will teach them formally and informally, when you sit in your house, when you walk (or drive!) by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You will be constantly looking for opportunities to relate to your sons what is happening in life, all from God's perspective. This is because your goal is that your children become worshipers of this great and mighty God that you serve. There is no one who compares to Him.

Do you see how God designed this? Moses was given God's word and commanded to teach it to the people (Deut 6:1). The adults in turn were to own God's word—it was to be on their hearts; then they were to take what they learned and teach it to their children (Deut 6:2, 7).

The Responsibility of the Church Toward Parents and Their Children

God has not changed the way we do this. Paul tells us that Christ “gave...some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service” (Eph 4:11-12). Evangelists and pastors equip the saints through the word of God, and then the saints who are built up through their teaching, do the work of the ministry. Part of the work of the ministry is teaching their children the word of God. They take what they have learned through preaching and teaching and help their children understand it. Remember chapter six in Ephesians comes after chapter four. And it is in chapter six that Paul directs fathers to bring up their children “in the discipline and instruction *of the Lord*” (Eph 6:4). They can do this because they have been equipped through the word of God by the preaching and teaching ministry of the church. So just as Moses taught the adults the word of God, who were then to teach their children, we are to do the same.

It is not the responsibility of the church to raise and disciple your children. The church is here to equip parents so they, in turn, can disciple their children. The primary instrument God uses is parents. They are the greatest influence in their child's life. This should drive us to our knees. The church is to assist parents. We have children's ministries in the church to strengthen, confirm, and reinforce what parents are teaching.

Besides preaching, one of the best ways for parents to be equipped and learn how to relate the word of God to their children is by getting involved in their child's class. They will see it modeled before them how to teach the Bible at their child's level.

Our Objective

Our ultimate goal is not well behaved, well liked, well rounded, moral children, where everyone congratulates you on how well you have trained your kids. Our ultimate goal is to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction *of the Lord*" (Eph 6:4). Our goal is Christ-centered children: children who obey and honor their parents because they love the Lord Jesus. So in all of our training, discipling, teaching, discipline and instruction, we should have one grand focus and objective in mind, and that is to point them to Christ—to placard Christ before them. He is the purpose of their existence. They were created in His image to worship Him, serve Him, obey Him, and enjoy Him forever. This is our goal. Everything else is secondary to this.

Our Hope

Though we cannot make our children Christians, we know from Scripture that it is God's desire to spread His glory to the next generation. It is His burden to save sinners in every generation because He loves to exalt His name and the name of His Son. His great passion is to make His name known because there is no one like Him.

God will be glorified in the church and in Christ to all generations

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:20-21)

God's great passion in this world is to make His glory known through His Son to all peoples and in all generations. He is being glorified in the church (which is His people), and in Christ Jesus *to all generations* (Eph 3:21).

The glory of God is most remarkably displayed in the uniting of sinful creatures to His eternal, sinless Son. When He does this it magnifies His love. It exalts His grace, mercy, compassion, and righteousness that one so glorious—the Son of God Himself, the eternal uncreated God who has forever existed in infinite beauty, power and glory—would stoop to save wretched sinners like us, and die in our place. Such love is beyond comprehension. This exalts our God.

Paul tells us that God is determined to be glorified like this in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations. He will continue to call sinners to Himself from every generation—sinners who do not deserve salvation—so they will marvel at Him, so the universe will continue in amazement at Him, and so the angels will continue to wonder at Him. God's heart is to spread His glory to every generation, so that He will be praised forever and ever. Amen!

God is determined to save the next generation

Posterity will serve Him; it will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has performed it. (Ps 22:30-31)

When you read these verses you sense a confidence that these things will happen. God has determined that our posterity will serve Him. He will have a people who worship and serve Him in the coming generations. We can be confident of that. This should give us great hope in our prayers, and in our teaching and discipling of our children. God has a desire to save the next generation and He will do it.

We, however, have a responsibility. We have to tell our children about the Lord and the great and mighty things He has done. “It *will* be told of the Lord to the coming generation” (Ps 22:30). God Himself will raise up a people who are burdened to tell of His glory to the coming generations. He will do this because this is His heart; He loves to spread the glory of His name. And if your heart is in sync with God’s, this is what you will do. You will tell your children and your children’s children about the great things God has done. Ministry to children is not some secondary, insignificant service to God; it is not a stepping stone to bigger and better things. It is the heart of God. It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation.

Charles Spurgeon wrote:

One great fault in many of our churches is that the children are left for the young people to care for; the older members, who have more wisdom, taking but very little notice of them....I hope for the day when the mighty men of Israel shall be found helping in this great warfare against the enemy. In the United States we have heard of Presidents, of Judges, Members of Congress, and persons in the highest positions, not condescending, for I scorn to use such a term, but honouring themselves by teaching little children in Sabbath-schools. He who teaches a class in a Sabbath-school has earned a good degree. I had rather receive the title of S.S.T. than M.A., B.A., or any other honour that ever was conferred by men. Let me beg you, then, to take heart, because your duties are so honourable.⁶

Why are they so honorable? Because God loves to spread the glory of His name to the next generation. And in years gone by we had presidents, judges, and members of Congress who considered it an honor to teach them. Is that how you view teaching children?

Notice God’s determination: “They [the coming generation, our posterity, our descendants, our children] will come” (Ps 22:31). God will draw them to Himself. He will save them, and He will use them to declare His righteousness to a people who are not even born yet. He will use them to spread His glory to the coming generations. Do you see God’s plan? This is what He has determined to do and what He is actually doing in the world today. He is not only spreading His glory to all peoples, but He is working through us to reach our children so they will perpetuate the spreading of His glory to the coming generations.

⁶ Charles Spurgeon, *Come Ye Children* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, nd.) 104.

“They will come and will declare His righteousness...that He has performed it” (Ps 22:31). Here we see that God will raise up a people to declare the gospel. Salvation is not our doing. We do not save ourselves. It is not our great parenting that saves our children. God purposely gives us difficult children at times to keep us humble and on our knees. If all our kids were easy going and obedient, we would attribute that to our great parenting and take all the glory. God will not allow this. He wants us to understand that salvation is all His doing. He performs it from beginning to end. He provided our righteousness through Christ so we can be saved. This is the message that will be propagated to the coming generations. God did it all through His Son (which is the context of this Psalm: the crucifixion of Christ). Isn't He glorious and worthy of all praise!

God is determined to save the next generation so they will praise Him, and the next generation after that so they will praise Him, and the one after that, so that all generations will glory in Him.

God's promise to His people. In Acts 2, Luke records Peter's sermon that he preached to the crowds on the day of Pentecost, and how the people were pierced to the heart by his message. They asked Peter what they should do. He told them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” (Acts 2:38-39). The promise is for you and your children, as many as the Lord will call to Himself. God's design is to work through parents to reach their children. This is His heart because He desires to spread His glory to all generations. This should give us hope as we pray and direct our children toward the Savior, and it should give us zeal to continue at this great task.

A Philosophy of Ministry to Parents and Their Children⁷

Our Passion: The Exaltation of Christ in the Coming Generation

From passages like Psalm 22:30-31; 145:4; Acts 2:38-39; and so forth, we see that God is determined to have a people who will worship Him and serve Him in the coming generations. This is what drives our passion for ministry to parents and children. Our desire for our children at Community Bible is to come to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and understand His glorious supremacy and sufficiency in all things. We want them to understand the mighty work Christ has done in making us righteous before God. Our longing is that our children not only come to know this, but go beyond us in faith, knowledge, righteousness, fruitfulness, evangelistic zeal, and in commitment to world evangelism for the glory of Christ.⁸

“It is our conviction that there is much we can do to nurture the faith of the children who have been entrusted to us. As we see the world's agenda for our children, we sense a tremendous urgency for

⁷ Much of the following was adapted from “A Vision for Ministry to Children and Their Parents,” by David and Sally Michael (Children Desiring God, 2006). Available:

⁸ <http://www.hopeingod.org/resources/images/1245.pdf> >14 August 2009
Michael, 7.

Christian parents and for the church to bring forth an even stronger agenda for God in the lives of our children.”⁹ We cannot stand idly by while the world molds our children. Instead, may God use us to actively shape our children into men and women of faith who know God and His glorious attributes and His infinite glory. May they be faithful followers of Christ who love the Bible, and grow in their abilities to understand, express, and defend its teachings. May they learn to worship the Lord with their head and their heart and to fill their lives with prayer as they grow in faith.¹⁰

We must not be short-sighted in our goals. *Children’s ministry in the church is not a place to keep children occupied while the adults have their meeting.* We are investing in the future of Community Bible Church. Our objective is that our children catch this vision of reaching the next generation, “a people who will be born,” all for the glory of Christ.

High Standards and Expectations

We are concerned about the low standards and expectations for ministry to children in the church today. Many contemporary children’s ministry leaders are convinced that children should have fun in church so that when they grow older they will continue to enjoy coming to church. We believe children should have fun in church, but this is not the banner we want to hang over the children’s ministry at Community Bible.¹¹

We want our church to aim, with aggressive Spirit-dependent determination, to raise our children with a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for their joy and the joy of all people (Ps 16:11). We want to see them raised in the faith knowing how to live by faith in dependence on Christ. We believe we can pursue this objective in a way that will still be fun for children.¹²

Our goal is to raise the standard as high in children’s ministry as we do in other areas of ministry. We will be as intentional, passionate, and serious about building a vision of God in the younger generations as we are in the older ones. We will pursue this vision for our children not only in our words, but also in the curriculum we use, the way we recruit and train our teachers, and the way we design our programs for our children.¹³

Teaching That Is Consistent With What We Teach Adults

Ministry to children at Community will be radically God-centered, Christ-exalting, biblical, and consistent with what we teach adults. Children do not need a man-centered gospel that tickles their ears and makes them feel good while they are on the road of destruction. They need to see the centrality of God through Christ in everything.

⁹ Michael, 7.
¹⁰ Michael, 7.
¹¹ Michael, 7.
¹² Michael, 8.
¹³ Michael, 8.

The centrality of God in all our parenting and teaching. Moses makes it clear that all our teaching should be characterized by the centrality of God. God gave statutes to Moses and commanded him to teach the people that they might do them, “so that you and your son and your grandson might *fear* the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments.... You shall *love* the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:2, 5). God is the main character in all our teaching. We are to love and fear Him only.

Although most Christian parents and teachers would affirm the centrality of God in all things, not all have parented and taught in ways that enable young disciples to recognize and embrace this truth. “Many of the resources available to parents and teachers stop short of this most essential reality. The centrality of God must be a constant refrain in all our various forms of teaching. Young disciples must be helped to recognize in concrete ways how God relates to absolutely everything in life. We must help them see that God’s ultimate purpose in everything is His own glory.”¹⁴

The supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. Children need to hear about the glorious supremacy of Christ, that He alone can quench their thirst and satisfy their hunger. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst” (John 6:35). Christ alone can save them, deliver them, and give them true meaning and joy. He is the only way to be reconciled to God.

Children also need to hear about the glorious sufficiency of Christ who enables us to live a life pleasing to God. Jesus alone is capable of helping someone with deep-seated problems of the heart. He can meet any need and restore any sin-ruined and sin-ravaged life.

At the outset of His public ministry, Jesus read the following passage from Isaiah to describe what His ministry would be like: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19).

This passage describes what Jesus does for His people. The people portrayed in these verses are those who have experienced the dominating power and devastating effects of the most severe emotional and personal problems. Jesus is able to heal, restore and deliver broken and downtrodden people. There is no problem beyond His delivering power!

The emphasis of this text is that Christ alone is able to do these things. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon *Me*...He anointed *Me*...He sent *Me*.” Christ alone by the power of the Spirit performs and grants the benefits listed here. No one else claims to be able to do the things that Jesus alone can do. Thus, Jesus is directing His people to look to Him and Him alone.

Jesus preached the gospel to the poor. A poor person is someone in need; they are without resources and they know it. The gospel is for those who see they have nothing to offer God. Children need to

¹⁴ Michael, 9.

understand this. They are poor and can only receive. Jesus provides for them what they need: righteousness and forgiveness.

Jesus was sent to proclaim release to the captives. This describes those in bondage to sin. Christ has come to proclaim that we have been released from imprisonment. He sets us free. Jesus liberates us from things which we could never overcome by ourselves.

Jesus gives sight to the blind. He opens the eyes of those in spiritual darkness so they can now see His glorious supremacy.

Jesus also sets free those who are oppressed. These are people who are bruised, wounded, and broken by the calamities of life. Jesus has been sent to set free those who are broken. Note carefully that Jesus not only proclaims deliverance, He actually delivers people!

Jesus has the resources to meet any and every need. The degree of people's problems and needs are not an issue to Him. He is able to meet any emotional or spiritual need because He is the all-sufficient Savior. This is what our children need to hear and be taught.

Teaching the whole counsel of God. God commands us to teach our children the word of God diligently (Deut 6:7). This is what God uses to save sinners. We are born again "through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet 1:23). "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). We cannot believe what we do not know, because knowledge precedes faith. Thus we must faithfully teach the Scriptures to our children.

Children need purposeful, intentional, formal instruction in the word of God. Teaching children only familiar stories from the Bible, while ignoring large portions of Scripture, leaves gaps in their knowledge of God. This will limit their faith in God or will lead to a misunderstanding of God, because of an incomplete picture of who He is. Therefore we use God-centered curriculum that covers the whole counsel of God.¹⁵ We want our children to have a big picture of the entire Bible so they can understand God and how He operates.

We also employ a curriculum that is true to the intent of Scripture. Much curriculum written for children is moralistic in nature and teaches the Bible with the aim of producing good behavior in children. Teaching that is true to Scripture presents the Bible as one continuous, interconnected story of the revelation of the character of God and His plan for the redemption of man. Acquainting children with God through Christ is the goal of Bible teaching.¹⁶

Teaching That Aims for the Heart

We can teach children so that they will be able to remember truth and repeat it back to us. We can also train them to conduct themselves in certain ways and maintain behavior that portrays

¹⁵ Michael, 12.

¹⁶ Michael, 12.

godliness.¹⁷ However, this is not enough. We want our children to not only know the truth but to embrace it with all their hearts, for it is possible to honor God with your lips while your heart is far away from Him (Matt 15:8).

Our children can know all about God. They can know many stories from the Bible. They can even have large portions of the Bible memorized, yet not honor God or have fellowship with Him. They can live their lives knowing who God is, and yet never meet Him until the day of judgment when He says to them, “Depart from Me. I never knew you” (cf. Matt 7:23).¹⁸

When we teach our children we must aim for their hearts as well as their heads. Our goal is not outward conformity to some standard, even a biblical one; our goal is transformation from within.

To reach this goal, we as parents and teachers must model what it means to love God and His word. We cannot teach our children something we have not experienced. We must have a passion for God and obeying His word. With Paul, we should be able to say to our children, “Join in following my example” (Phil 3:17).

Children must also learn to obey their parents (Eph 6:1). It is much easier to cultivate a healthy love and fear of God in children when they have a healthy love and fear of their parents. On the other hand, it is very difficult for children to learn to honor God if they defy their parents (that He has put over them). We must help parents be courageous in their parenting and stand against the permissiveness of our culture, which will only lead to a child’s destruction.¹⁹

Finally, if we desire to reach our goal of transformed hearts, we must pray, for ultimately this is a work only God can do. We must intercede for our children that God would do a mighty work on their hearts so they will repent of their sin and embrace Christ.

Informal Teaching and Modeling

God commands us to teach our children at every opportunity: when we sit in our house, when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up (Deut 6:7). It should be natural to talk about God all the time. The things that happen in our lives should be explained to our children from God’s perspective. We want to give them a Christian world view. How does God look at the things that we are going through? What does His word say about these things that can help us?

This does not mean that we quote the Bible all day, or spout systematic theology in every conversation. It does mean that when we grasp a profound truth from God’s word, we think of ways to explain it to our children. It does mean that we try to help our children understand life’s trials and

¹⁷ Michael, 9.
¹⁸ Michael, 10.
¹⁹ Michael, 10.

troubles from God’s perspective. God wants us to use the ordinary events of life to teach our children to know God and trust His Son.²⁰

One of the reasons Jesus could instruct His disciples so frequently was that He spent time with them. Teachable moments cannot be seized upon if you are not present with your children when such moments occur. If we are to teach our children we must spend time with them. The quality of our time with children is important, but the quantity of time is essential as well. We should never sacrifice quantity presuming that quality will make up for our negligence. Families must have seasons of un-frenzied time to work and play together.²¹

Children benefit and learn from the example of the godly people around them. This must begin with their parents at home, who are their greatest role model. The church also must be active in promoting inter-generational activities so that young people can learn from the experiences and maturity of those who have walked longer with God, and who have learned to trust God through life’s many ups and downs. If children are always in an environment with other children and youth only slightly older than them, they will miss out on the richness that adult interaction can provide for them.²²

At Community Bible, we want children to worship with their parents as soon as they are able to sit through the service. We believe children absorb much from attending worship services with their parents as they observe the delight and love their parents have of worshiping God. Children who are encouraged to participate with their parents in singing and listening will sense the importance of worship.

Equipping Parents to Carry Out Their Responsibility

A major responsibility of the church is to equip parents so they can be outfitted to train their children (Eph 4:11-13). Many parents expecting a child will spend several weeks in classes prior to the birth so they will be ready for that blessed moment. After the birth, there are volumes of resources parents can use that help them learn how to care for their child. Our society has much to offer parents in raising physically healthy children, but it is the role of the church to provide resources and support that will help parents raise spiritually healthy children.²³

As part of a church, parents are tapped into a collective body of wisdom, and a network of support and encouragement that can aid them in their parenting responsibility. This is especially important given the reality of single-parent homes and unequally-yoked marriages. The church is in a unique position to help stand in the gap for children and parents who find themselves in less than ideal situations.²⁴

²⁰ John A. Younts, *Everyday Talk* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2004), 15.
²¹ Michael, 13.
²² Michael, 14.
²³ Michael, 11.
²⁴ Michael, 11.

The leaders at Community Bible will encourage parents to take their responsibility for raising their children seriously, and will train them to be effective in their instruction of their children. We will give significant attention to strengthening families because this is the greatest avenue for nurturing faith in children. Parents will be exhorted to guard their families from over-commitment and over-involvement in other areas so they can carry out their family responsibilities. Parents will also be encouraged to get involved in ministry to children.

We will emphasize the father's unique responsibility before God to provide spiritual leadership in the home and inspire them to set God-centered goals for their children and family.

We will exhort parents to participate in the first *Foundations to Parenting* class. This course introduces them to the theology and philosophy of ministry to parents and children, and offers practical suggestions regarding how to teach children during the first few years of life and how to train them in righteousness and discipline. As children mature, *Foundations to Parenting* classes two through four are offered to parents, with a focus on training children at the preschool, elementary, and Junior and Senior High levels.

Parents will also be reminded that nurturing the faith of their children is *not* a higher calling than following Jesus. Parents must be encouraged to seek first the kingdom of God while trusting Him for the outcome of their children's faith. Parents can become so preoccupied with the welfare of their children that they neglect the Great Commission.²⁵

High Expectations of Teachers and Helpers

"Teachers will take their calling seriously and be inspired by a vision of what our children can be."²⁶ We do not assume that everyone who desires to teach is necessarily ready to teach. Therefore, we will offer opportunities for aspiring teachers to develop their gifts. We will offer training that will help them be effective in handling God's word and in their understanding of how to teach children. They will be encouraged to teach for response, touching the heart as well as the head.²⁷

All of our workers will be carefully screened before they are entrusted with our children and they will be encouraged to guard their own hearts and walk with Christ so they will be godly examples to our children.²⁸

²⁵ Michael, 15.
²⁶ Michael, 8.
²⁷ Michael, 15.
²⁸ Michael, 15.

A Vision of How God Can Use Our Children

We will give our children a biblical vision of how God can use them. We should expect that God will not only save our children (because His heart is to save the next generation), but that He will also use them mightily while they are young. We should expect this because, this is God's way.

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. (1 Cor 1:26-29)

God uses the unwise, the unsophisticated, the weak, the nobodies, the foolish, the base, and the despised, so that He gets the glory. Young people do not have much wisdom, strength, money, degrees, or experience; therefore, we should anticipate God doing great things through them because this is how God operates. We must give our children this vision: that God wants to use them now in mighty ways.

There are many biblical examples of God using young people to do hard things for His glory. Joseph was seventeen years old when he rejected the sexual advances of an older woman when he was alone with her in her house. He refused to give into sexual temptation, saying, "How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9). We must remember this is after his brothers sold him into slavery, when it appeared that God had abandoned him. Yet, he was more resolved than ever to live for God. We should expect God to help our young people remain sexually pure. God can enable them to stand against the tide.

Daniel as a teenager was resolved to remain pure in an evil, pagan culture for the glory of God. King Josiah at the age of sixteen "began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year [when he was twenty] he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the carved images and the molten images" (2 Chron 34:3). He lived rightly before the Lord and pursued hard after God when he was a youth, and God used him mightily as a result.

When David, the shepherd boy, heard the challenge of Goliath, he was ready to go to battle because Goliath was blaspheming the name of the living God (1 Sam 17). King Saul, however, attempted to stop David because he was a youth, where as Goliath was an experienced warrior. David was able to convince the king to let him fight, and he then defeated Goliath with a rock and a sling.

David told Goliath:

You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands. (1 Sam 17:45-47).

These words were spoken by a teenager, a person God used mightily because he believed in the greatness of God. We should not be like Saul, hindering our youth from what God wants to do through them. Instead, we should be teaching our children the greatness of God and that He can do whatever He wants with whomever He wants—even them.

Our Responsibility and God's Sovereignty

We have a responsibility to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). The home and the church provide environments where God often does His saving work. Our obedience to God and our faithfulness as parents do not ultimately save our children from God's wrath, but are very often the means that God uses. Similarly, while our disobedience and unfaithfulness as parents do not condemn our children, they can be the means by which our children are led to destruction. God has ordained that parents bear the responsibility of teaching their children the gospel of Christ. Our success in this endeavor ultimately matters more to Him than it does to us, and He has made all the resources we need available to us.²⁹ Therefore, we as parents with the help of the church must be faithful to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

The outcome of a child's faith, however, is not guaranteed by having parents who faithfully teach their children the word of God, nor is it guaranteed by being active in a church that diligently strives to teach and equip parents and children.³⁰ No child or adult can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him (John 6:44). Parents have no hope of their children being saved apart from the regenerating work of God. Therefore we must pray and trust that God will work through us.

We must understand our responsibility and God's sovereignty. God commands us to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, but only He can save them. If a parent or teacher has a burden for the soul of a child, they can be assured that burden does not come from the devil. He does not want anyone to be saved. Burdens for his soul come from God.

So when you labor over the soul of your child and wrestle with God in your prayers for him, do not have hopeless prayers. "Lord, I know you are the one who saves people. I sure hope you have elected him." This is not a prayer of faith. We never see Paul praying this way, even though he understood election and God's sovereignty better than anyone. Here is how Paul prayed for his fellow Jews, "My heart's desire and my prayer [literally begging] to God for them is for their salvation" (Rom 10:1). Paul's heart was engaged. He was burdened for the souls of these men, so he prayed, begging and pleading for God to save them. He prayed with the expectation that God would answer. He believed in God's sovereignty: God sovereignly brings people in your life and He gives you burdens to pray for them. This is how we are to labor and pray for our children.

²⁹ Michael, 9.

³⁰ Michael, 9.

We need to understand God uses means. He uses His word, prayer, parents, and the church. Think about the means He used in your life. If you are a Christian someone worked hard so you would be saved. We are not saying they saved you; God saved you. He worked it all out. But God surely used people in your life—people He burdened to pray for your soul; people He moved on to witness to you. Someone who kept working hard, “bugging” you with the gospel. God wants us to work hard in the hope that our children will be saved, and He wants us to use the means He has given us. Our expectation and hope is that He would move on our children’s hearts and cause them to respond to the gospel and be saved because He has determined to have a people who will praise Him in every generation. This should give us hope and a zeal to obey His commands and carry out our responsibility with all diligence.

Vision and Philosophy of Curriculum Used in Children’s Ministry

The primary curriculum used for our Children’s Ministry at Community Bible Church is from Children Desiring God. We wholeheartedly agree with their vision and philosophy. Here is what they say about their curriculum:³¹

God-Centeredness

We believe that the Bible is a book first and foremost about God. The other characters in the Bible merely point to God. So in our curriculum, we have attempted to exalt God—to show Him as a great and almighty God. In every lesson, Scripture is studied in the context of the question, “What does this say about God?”

Depth

We believe that children can handle deep truth at a young age. We want to fill them with solid Bible truth that will give them a foundation to fall back on when they go through deep waters. For this reason, our curriculum continually refers children to the Word of God; Bibles are an essential tool for children studying Children Desiring God curriculum. We believe that the Bible must be taught in depth, yet in a child-friendly, interesting manner. For this reason, much attention has been devoted to the development of creative presentation of essential Bible truths.

Incremental

We believe that children learn “precept upon precept.” Truth presented on a simple level in the preschool years is reinforced and expanded at primary levels, and so forth. For this reason, truths are reintroduced to the children as they grow older, each time digging deeper and widening the scope of their understanding.

Application

We believe that faith comes through hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). However, we also believe that teaching falls short if it simply feeds words through the minds of children. We want truth to be clearly understood by the children. Therefore, God’s truth is explained through illustration,

³¹ The following is taken from “Vision, Philosophy, and Training Manual” (Bethlehem Baptist Church). Available: < <http://www.hopeingod.org/resources/images/2064.ydf> > 18 August 2009.

connecting the known to the unknown. Because interaction with God’s truth is critical, children are encouraged to look up Scripture passages, discover and respond to truth.

Theology

[Our] teaching emphasizes God’s sovereignty in directing everything to serve His good purpose. “My Purpose Will Stand: A Study for Children on the Providence of God” most clearly presents this view, helping children understand that nothing is outside the control of the all-powerful and all-loving God of the universe.

Partnership with Parents

We believe that before God, parents, not churches have the primary responsibility for the spiritual nurture of their children. We have made every effort to structure the curricula in a way that allows the church to “walk along side” parents, enabling and equipping them in this God-given role. For that reason, we strongly encourage parental involvement in the classroom and have developed meaningful take-home materials for every lesson to encourage and enable parents to interact with their children over Scripture and the lesson content.

The only thing we would add to their vision is:

The Centrality of Christ

The Bible is a book about the glorious person and work of Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 24:44). It is centered in His redemptive work for man. Thus, when we teach the Bible our goal is to show how it relates to Christ and His glorious work.

Scope and Sequence

It is helpful to have a big picture overview of what the children are taught at each age and stage of the process. Here is a brief overview of the curriculum currently being used on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.

Sundays

Nursery Curriculum: (24–35 months) (1 year cycle)

Current: “A Sure Foundation” (CDG)

Preschool Curriculum: 3-4 years old (2 year cycle)

Year one: “He Established a Testimony” – *O.T.* (CDG)

Year two: “He Has Spoken By His Son” – *N.T.* (CDG)

Early Elementary: K-3rd grade

Primary (K & 1st grades):

Sunday School (2 year cycle)

Year one: “He Established a Testimony” – *O.T.* (CDG)

Year two: “He Has Spoken By His Son” – *N.T.* (CDG)

Children’s Church (2 year cycle)

Year one: “The ABC’s of God (CDG)

Year two: “Jesus What a Savior” (CDG)

Secondary: 2nd & 3rd grade:

Sunday School - (2 year cycle)

Year one: “My Purpose Will Stand” (CDG)

Year two: “How Majestic Is Your Name” (CDG)

“Faithful to All His Promises” (CDG)

Children’s Church - (2year cycle)

Year one: “In the Beginning...Jesus” (CDG)

Year two: “To Be Like Jesus” (CDG)

Late Elementary: 4th-6th grades – *Sunday School* (3 year cycle)

Year one: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, A Savior is Born, The Risen Savior (GOG)

Year two: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges & Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Daniel & Jonah, Ezra, Esther, & Nehemiah, The King is Born, He Is Risen

Year three: The Life of Christ, Acts, & Revelation (GOG)

Wednesdays

Generation To Come

Buzzie Bees: 3-4 years old - (2 year cycle)

Year one: "He Established a Testimony" – *O.T.* (CDG)

Year two: "He Has Spoken By His Son" – *N.T.* (CDG)

RED Builders: K-1st grade - (2 year cycle)

Year one: "He Has Been Clearly Seen" (CDG)

Year three: "I Stand in Awe" (CDG)

GOLD Builders: 2nd-3rd grade (2 year cycle)

Year one: "Fight the Good Fight" (CDG)

Year two: "Way of the Wise" (CDG)

Knights: 4th-6th grade (7 year cycle)

Year one: Learning the Greatness of God (Catechism)

Year two: Fighter Verses

CDG- Children Desiring God

GOG- Generations of Grace

CBC- Community Bible Church

Classroom Management

General Policies

Registration

Each child participating in Children’s Ministry must be properly registered at the beginning of each ministry year (first Sunday in September). Parents of children entering mid-year must fill out registration forms to be submitted to the Children’s Ministry Office. Forms are available in each classroom.

Check-in and Check-out Procedures

Each class must take attendance of all children present. On Wednesdays at Generations to Come, all parents must sign in all their children regardless of age. On Sundays, all children below the age of nine must be checked in by a parent. Children (nursery – 8 years old) can only be released to their parents or parent’s designee. (A responsible sibling designated by the parent and approved by the teacher may pick up the child.)

Lovingly Welcome Children

Often younger children feel insecure and afraid when they first come to class. The prospect of being left by their parents with strange people in a strange place can be fearful. Children need to be lovingly welcomed into the classroom, and the parents need to be reassured that their child will be fine. (See *Providing Loving Assurance* in Section 5 under “Greeter” for a further elaboration on how to reassure both child and parents.)

Bathroom Procedures

Children are to be taken to the bathroom in groups only. They are never to be taken alone. Please follow specific department guidelines.

Behavioral Principles and Guidelines for Children³²

We love children at Community Bible and are thrilled to have them among us. They are not only the future of this church, but they are the means by which the fame of the Lord's name will be carried to the next generation. We who labor on behalf of children and their parents take our responsibility seriously and want to do all we can to build faith into these children and to encourage their parents. This responsibility is what has inspired and informed these principles and guidelines for behavior at Community.

Three Convictions

There are at least three convictions which have motivated the development of these behavioral guidelines for children. First, we are a big family and it is important for certain boundaries to be in place for the sake of the "family." Stewardship of church property, the safety of others and the safety of our children are at stake. A child running on a Sunday morning may not be a concern to most people but for a 75 year old woman, who is shaky on her feet and terrified of a broken hip, a running child poses a very serious threat.

Second, children who are well-disciplined and under control honor the Lord, honor their parents and are a positive reflection of the ministry of our church. If this is true, then the opposite is also true. Unruly children dishonor the Lord and are an embarrassment to their parents and to the church (Pro 29:15, 1 Tim 3:4, 5).

Third, and probably most important, is that discipline is an important part of nurturing faith in our children. To follow Jesus is to obey Jesus and to submit to His authority. Cultivating an obedient spirit in our children and teaching them to yield to God-given authorities in their lives helps to prepare their hearts to obey Christ and to bend their wills to His.

Guiding Principles

Although it is possible to control the outward actions of a child and produce a desired behavior, the goal of our ministry to young people is to direct their hearts toward God and cultivate a spirit which is responsive to Him. True obedience and discipline flows from a heart that is responsive to the Lord. It is not merely the conformity to an external set of rules. Therefore, if we are concerned about the behavior of our children, the most important thing that parents and children's workers can do is to seek God's help in nurturing hearts of faith out of which acts of righteousness will flow.

Parents are ultimately responsible for the behavior of their children. We will expect parents to keep their children under control during public gatherings and to make sure that their children are under adult supervision while they are in the building. When under the supervision of a children's worker at Community, that worker will be expected to maintain order and appropriate behavior of the

³²

The following section was adapted from "Vision, Philosophy, and Training Manual" (Bethlehem Baptist Church). Available: < <http://www.hopeingod.org/resources/images/2064.ydf> > 18 August 2009.

children in his care. If a child is not responsive to any of the permissible forms of classroom discipline, the child will be taken to the parents. We understand that some children will struggle with behavior problems more than others. Therefore, the Children's Ministry Leadership is eager to pray, strategize, and work with parents to find solutions.

Expectations of Children at Community

Although the behavioral boundaries vary depending on the age of the child, the activity they are involved in, and where that activity takes place, most rules will fall under one of the four basic teaching goals we have for the children at Community .

Respect for the Lord

Children will be expected to treat church or site buildings, furnishings and equipment in a way that honors the Lord and to use those things in the way that they were intended. Specifically, children will be encouraged to walk on floors, not on chairs or tables. Paper is an appropriate medium for artistic expression, not walls or furniture. Trash belongs in trash containers, not on the floor. Space and equipment should be left in the same or better condition than it was found. Children or their parents may be asked to accept responsibility for accidental or intentional damage to church or site property or equipment.

Respect for Adults

We want the children of Community to honor the adults in the church with respectful speech and behavior. Sassing or defying the instruction or correction of an adult are examples of what is considered disrespectful.

Respect for Others

We will endeavor to provide a physically, emotionally and spiritually safe environment for every child involved at Community. Children will be encouraged to think before they speak and find encouraging things to say to others. Therefore, mean, crude or hurtful speech or actions toward others is not acceptable.

Respect for Themselves

We will encourage children not to act in ways that will put their bodies or their faith at risk.

A Word About Correction

We believe that discipline should be primarily positive and so we encourage parents and those who work with children to be quick to encourage and affirm positive behavior. We also encourage immediate and consistent response to negative behavior before it escalates into a serious problem. If the parents are present we will expect them to correct their children when they misbehave.

If parents are not present, the person in charge may respond by first speaking to the child and issuing a warning. If the child persists in the behavior, he may be denied a privilege or isolated from the group. The last resource available to the worker is to take the child to his parents.

Since it is our conviction that parents are the appropriate persons to employ corporal punishment when needed (and this is best carried out privately), any physical form of correction is considered unacceptable in the classroom or any other group setting. Those working with children are permitted only to gently restrain a child to keep him from hurting himself or another.

Guidelines for Classroom Discipline³³

Preventative Measures

Very little can be more frustrating than a classroom that is out of control! When thinking about discipline in the classroom, the key is to be proactive, or preventative in your perspective. A large amount of the struggles you will face can be averted by your own preparation. Consider the following suggestions:

- Pray during the week and before the class begins.
- Establish your authority.
- Create a calm, quiet, ordered atmosphere.
- Be prepared and organized.
- Anticipate problems before they arise.
- Establish class rules. It is important to let the children know your expectations.
- Make your rules consistent.
- Enforce your rules. Do not ignore infractions. Follow through on the Instructions you give.
- Let children know the consequence of misbehavior.
- Be as lenient in your rules as you can.
- Affirm and reward positive behavior.
- Let children make choices when and where it is appropriate.
- Make activities interesting and fun.
- Move quickly from one activity to the next.
- Make sure activities and expectations are age appropriate.
- Give warnings before activity changes (especially for preschoolers).
- Arrange your room to prevent problems.
- Separate bad combinations of children.
- Make troublemakers into helpers (keep them busy).
- Be actively involved with the children, not talking together or doing your preparation.
- Know your children and their unique needs.
- Make children feel safe (let them know you will protect their rights).

Corrective Measures

When preventative discipline fails and a child needs to be corrected, consider the following:

³³

The following section (except “How to Approach Parents”) was adapted from “Vision, Philosophy, and Training Manual” (Bethlehem Baptist Church). Available: < <http://www.hopeingod.org/resources/images/2064.ydf> > 18 August 2009.

- Pray for wisdom!
- Redirect the behavior.
- Let the child experience the natural consequences of his misbehavior when possible.
- Take action! Do not lecture or just threaten to take action.
 - Loss of privilege
 - Isolation
 - Make “it” right (may include restitution, asking of forgiveness, etc.)
 - Remove child to parents if necessary
- Analyze causes for misbehavior.
- Point them to Jesus Christ as their only hope for real lasting change.
- Pray with the child.

Remember discipline is a combination of training and correction; positive instruction and negative “re-instruction”, proactive and reactive. To discipline a child is to love a child, just as our Father in heaven loves us and disciplines us. The goal of careful, loving discipline is “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (cf. Heb 12:5-11).

How to Approach Parents

After doing the above steps, if a child continues to display willful and defiant behavior, the parents must be called to administer proper discipline. Only the director (or team member designated by the director) should talk to the parents. If the parents must be pulled out of the service, the team leader or director should take the child and meet with the parents *in private* and briefly explain what the child did. Explain to the parents that after they discipline their child, he may return to the class if he can obey.

As soon as possible after the class, meet with the parents in a *private place* and discuss the situation more fully in a spirit of love and understanding. They may be experiencing similar problems at home. We want to encourage the parents to be faithful to God’s word and persevere in lovingly bringing up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

If the problem continues, diligently pray for the child and his parents. Evaluate with the rest of your team your class structure and discuss how this may be adding to the problem. Stay in contact with the parents giving regular updates and encouragement. Make sure your director is aware of the problem. If the parents’ discipline seems ineffective, notify your director so he or one of the elders can meet with the parents to help them.

Policies and Procedures

Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency, follow the evacuation route posted in your classroom and assemble in the specified meeting place for your class. Preschool department evacuate in lines using “ropes.” Grades 1-6 line up with adults at the beginning and end of the line. The last adult out of the classroom (Team Leader) should do a quick sweep of the room and make sure to take the attendance sheet so it can be verified that all children have been evacuated. When all children have been accounted for, they may be individually released to their parents. Note each child on the attendance sheet as they are dismissed.

Policy for Highly Allergic or Asthmatic Children

Volunteers and paid staff of the church shall not administer medications to any child, even with parental permission. Parents have the primary responsibility to insure the safety of their children. We have asked parents who have children with severe allergies or life-threatening allergic reactions to do the following:

- Complete the class registration form which includes a medical/allergy alert section.
- Speak directly with their child’s directors informing them verbally of the allergies, reactions and consequences to their child.
- Send appropriate snack food for their child if they wish.
- Leave a telephone/cell-phone number at which they may be contacted immediately in case of an emergency.

Community Bible Church will attempt to do all we can to insure the safety of our children, including the following:

- We will not allow common allergenic foods to be part of the snack regimen (peanuts, etc.).
- We will provide registration forms requesting health information.
- We will provide training for staff to respond to emergency situations.
- For younger children, we will provide name-tags for children which will specify the child’s allergies, the allergic reaction(s), any pertinent medical information, and the emergency telephone numbers of the parents.
- The child’s teachers will work closely with parents to insure the child’s safety.
- In case of an emergency, we will attempt to contact the parent immediately. If the child appears to be in a life-threatening condition, the church will immediately call 911.

Promotion Policy

Community Bible Church has established the policy of promoting children through the classes primarily by the age of the child. Children with special needs are evaluated on an individual basis. Promotion Sunday is the first Sunday in September. The following is the entrance age breakdown for each ministry:

Nursery - All Sunday Services and Wednesday Nights during GTC

Infant-Toddlers 0-35 months old Children will be promoted to ***Sunday Preschool*** and ***Buzzie Bees*** upon their 3rd birthday.

Sunday Ministries

Lions - Preschool	3-4 years old	Sunday after 3 rd birthday
K - 1 st	5-6 year olds	By September 1
2 nd - 3 rd	7-8 years old	By September 1
4 th - 6 th	9-11 years old	By September 1

Generation to Come - Wednesday Night Ministry:

Buzzie Bees	3-4 years old	Wednesday after 3 rd birthday
Red Builders (K – 1 st grade)	5-6 years old	By September 1
Gold Builders (2 nd – 3 rd grade)	7-8 years old	By September 1
Knights (4 th – 6 th grade)	9-10 years old	By September 1

Policy Regarding Inappropriate Behavior

We want to do all we can to protect our children from any possibility of mistreatment, including physical or sexual abuse. We also want to protect our teachers and helpers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a minor.

General Considerations: Being Above Reproach and Avoiding the Appearance of Evil

- Two adults must be present at all times with children.
- Use wisdom and discretion in expressing brotherly love to fellow workers. No unrelated male and female will work alone or meet alone in secluded areas of the church without someone nearby in the building.
- Workers must dress modestly and appropriately for working with young children.
- Use appropriate physical affection with children. Give loving pats on the head or shoulder. Do not let older children sit on teacher's lap.

Behaviors to Watch for in Adults Working with Children

1. Two problems to look out for:
 - Watch out for behavior by anyone in the church, especially a Children's Ministry worker that indicates that he or she may be inclined to abuse, molest, or otherwise harm any child under the care of this church.
 - Also watch out for indications that a child under the care of this church is being abused, molested, neglected, or otherwise harmed, whether by someone in this church or outside this church.
2. Specific things to look for:
 - Inappropriate comments about sexual matters, especially about or in the presence of minors.
 - Use of pornography, including inclination toward sexually explicit television, movies, books, or magazines.
 - Excessive and inappropriate attention to a particular child, especially if it involves an effort to be alone with the child.

Admonish or Report Inappropriate Behavior

- If you observe a Children's Ministry worker (or another member of the church) talking or acting in a manner that seems to be innocent but might appear to others to be inappropriate, you should privately admonish that person and encourage him to exercise greater care in words and actions (Matt 18:15).
- If you observe a Children's Ministry worker (on another member of the church) talking or acting in a manner that gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of improper involvement with a child or of the potential for improper involvement with a child, you should promptly report your concern to an appropriate pastor who will look into the matter and take appropriate corrective measures.

Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, you should talk with either your director or a pastor to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child and help the family.

Team Member Descriptions and Responsibilities

At Community we recognize that ministry to children is centered around a “body” structure. One of Paul’s favorite metaphors for the church is to liken it to a body, with Christ as the head (1 Cor 12:12ff). We are a body with many diverse parts that all works together with a common goal: the exaltation of Christ. We have been given different gifts that each of us are to use for the building up of the body in love (Eph 4:16).

The benefits of approaching ministry this way is that it allows each person to serve in ways that focuses on their strengths and gifts. This encourages them that they are being useful and it motivates them to keep serving. It allows them to have the support of others. It encourages everyone to be striving after one common goal: the building up of the body and the glory of Christ.

General Expectations

We are all ultimately accountable to God, and desire to honor and glorify Him. To that end, we ask each individual to commit to do the following:

1. Seek a vital, growing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through personal and corporate worship, and the study of God’s Word and prayer.
2. Be quick to deal with sin in your life, and when appropriate, communicating with your director about any issues that may hinder your ability to serve.
3. Perform your duties faithfully in a way which honors Christ and is an example to the children you lead and the other members of the team.
 - This includes not allowing little things to disrupt your commitment to serve.
 - Finding an approved replacement if you need to be absent.
 - Attending children’s ministry meetings and team meetings.
4. Do all you can to encourage your teammates and work together for the glory of God.
5. Endeavor to help promote the values and vision for family discipleship at Community Bible Church.

Director

The primary role of the Director is to lovingly lead the ministry team and children, and partner with parents by doing the following:

1. Provide spiritual leadership and direction. This includes:
 - Praying for the ministry and all who are involved, including workers, children, and parents.
 - Being an example to the team members of godly, joyful service.
 - Being well prepared and knowing the curriculum.
 - Attending the Directors' meetings and ensuring the ministry is following Community Bible's overall vision and philosophy of ministry to children.
 - Meeting with team members regularly to articulate the vision of the ministry and ensure a coordinated effort.
 - Organize the ministry
 - ▶ Develop each portion of the class, structuring it to best foster a time of worship and learning.
 - ▶ Direct the team members as to what their roles will be.
 - ▶ Organize classroom, supplies, resources, etc.
2. Shepherding and training the team. This includes:
 - Inviting people to come and see the ministry to determine if it would be a place where God would use them for His glory.
 - Providing orientation for new team members.
 - Giving ongoing spiritual care, encouragement, and when needed, correction.
 - Observing team members and with a disciplined approach, helping them develop their God-given gift (See Mentoring Teachers for specifics).
 - Exhorting each member to be excellent in their area of service, particularly in preparing and praying before their time of ministry.
 - Being actively concerned for the spiritual well-being of the team.
 - Promoting joyful camaraderie and creative complementation of gifts among team members.
3. Loving and teaching the children. This includes:
 - Getting to know them and spending time with them; listening and praying with them.
 - Setting the expectations for the class and for the year.
 - Being the key individual that helps with discipline when needed.
4. Communicating with parents/guardians. This includes:
 - Seeking to connect with parents, especially when there are opportunities to share good things about their children.
 - Inviting them to be engaged in what is happening in this part of their child's life as we are here to support their God-given role.
 - Discussing in private any disciplinary issues and working with them to help their child make the most of the opportunity they have in class.

Greeter

Description

Greeters lovingly welcome children as they are being dropped off in the classroom. They provide loving reassurance to parents if their child is reluctant or fearful to enter the class. They also spark the child's interest by informing him of what will be happening while the parent is away.

This is an important role as you will be among the key people interacting with the parents when they drop off and pick up the children. Your goal is to not only keep an accurate head count, but to reassure parents that their children will be in a safe worship environment so they can feel more comfortable with entrusting their children to us. To that end, please focus your attention on those that are leaving and arriving. Together with the rest of the team, ensure there is order to the transitions.

Responsibilities

1. Welcome and check in students as they are dropped off.
 - Greet the parents especially if they are visitors or relatively new to the church. Make sure you answer any questions they may have, or refer them to the Team Leader for anything you may not know.
 - Check in the students on the attendance sheet, if their name is not on the list be sure to write it down.
2. Between morning services, use the attendance sheet to verify that all the children who are there from first service when you arrive are accounted for.
 - If any children are picked up after you take over, make sure you mark them as leaving.
3. Do a head count by the end of worship to ensure you have an accurate accounting of the children. This is especially important in case of an emergency.
4. At the end of class:
 - Be ready to greet the parents again, and call their child's name to be dismissed.
 - In general, feel free to share praise/encouragement about their child. But be careful. If there were disciplinary issues and we are waiting for the opportunity to talk to the parent, too much praise may cause them to develop an untrue perspective of how their child is doing in class.
 - Mark them off the list.
5. Please let the Director know if there are children who are not on the attendance list who are becoming consistent attenders so we can include them on the master sheet.

Provide Loving Assurance

Often children feel quite insecure and afraid when they first come to class. The prospect of being left by their parents with strange people in a strange place can be fearful. Children will often react by crying and clinging to their parents. Parents are quite hesitant to leave their crying child with strangers. Thus we have a dilemma.

What can we do to comfort parents and children?

First, remember our purpose which is to teach the children the wonderful truths of the Savior and to allow parents to attend the service and be fed the word of God.

Second, take loving command of the situation (and pray!). Reassure parents that this is a child's normal reaction, and that we deal successfully with this all the time. Also, reassure them that we will call for them if the child needs them.

Third, reassure the child (use the child's name!). Assure the child of your love by eye contact and kind, reassuring words. Spark the child's interest by informing him of what will be happening while the parent is away (i.e. Bible story, songs, snacks, etc.).

Fourth, take loving command by "making the break." Allow the parent time to give words of instruction or comfort to the child. When the parent is done and while parent and child are still together, step in to take charge of the situation. Address them both: "It's time to let mommy/daddy go to church now while you come to class. We will count to five and let mommy/daddy go." Now, gently but firmly take the child from the parent. Immediately take the child to activities that you have prepared that will require his involvement (puzzles, stickers, books). As you do this, give personal, one-on-one attention to the child (smiles, pats, etc.).

Please note that we are not encouraging the parents to "sneak away", but are dealing directly with the problem. We do not want to convey that we are trying to trick the child.

When to call for the parents (the last resort!): if the child cries longer than 15-20 minutes, or if in your judgment for some reason the parent must be contacted.

Finally, give praise to the child who has done well when the parent returns.

Further helps for the more difficult child.

1. Allow the parent to attend the first class with the child.
2. Allow the child to bring something small but familiar from home (hot wheel car, teddy bear, etc.).
3. Encourage the parent to help the child build a positive, excited attitude toward the class by talking and praying about it with the child throughout the week.

4. The director should inform the parent of the importance of consistent church attendance. Bringing their child to class consistently will help the child to overcome their fear. Inconsistent attendance will only hinder their progress.
5. The director should let the parent know that he is going to partner with them in this struggle by praying for their child specifically throughout the week.

By providing kind, loving reassurance to parents and children, and by taking loving control of the situation, both will feel more confident in the separation. The child will settle down in a few minutes and the parents will appreciate knowing that their child is in safe hands.

In some cases, it becomes evident that we are not dealing with just a “fear” problem. Perhaps the child is not being disciplined and trained biblically. The child may have a habit of manipulating his parent and always having his own way. Greeters should discuss and pray over cases such as these with their director. The director may need to give biblical counsel to the parent or point them to biblical child training books available in our bookstore. In more extreme cases, the parents may need to be referred to the pastoral staff for counseling.

Small Group Leader

Description

They are assigned to a group of children who are “their kids” for the school year. They are critical in helping the children make personal application of the lesson material and memory verses. They are also to make efforts to maintain positive relations, support and good communication with the children and their parents.

Responsibilities

The main purpose of the Small Group Leader is to provide leadership and structure during the small group time. This is done by doing the following:

1. Pray and prepare during the week. Study the lesson and memory verse. Pray for this great opportunity God has given you to minister and pray for the children and families He has entrusted to your care.
2. Reinforce the Bible lesson (however, do not re-teach it).
 - Seek to involve the children in looking at the Bible for themselves. This may include using worksheets and asking some key review questions about what they have studied.
 - Similar to the Teacher role, help them to understand how to apply these biblical truths to their own lives. The emphasis is on practical application, not theoretical discussion. This might include seeing how knowing this truth about God and what He has done or requires of us, applies to life at home with mom and dad and siblings, or at school, or with friends, or in their own private life.
 - Although they are children, be careful not to lower the bar. They can understand much, but just as it is true for us, the goal is not simply knowledge, but obedience and worship of Christ.
 - See if there were ways God encouraged them during the past week regarding the previous week’s lesson.
3. Teach and review the memory verse
 - Seek to accurately and creatively teach the memory verse that is being introduced for the week.
 - Focus on observation, interpretation, and application. (See Teacher role below for more details on how to do this.)
 - Review verse from last week and meet one-on-one with any children that have memorized the verse to mark off their book.
 - Help any other children learn the verse even if they have not memorized it.
4. Love, listen, and pray for the children.

Teacher

Description

They must clearly understand the curriculum's purpose and goals as well as the goals of the classroom. They are responsible to carefully prepare and teach lessons in a group setting, seeking to communicate truth with energy and creativity. Teachers must be members, pass a doctrinal test, and be willing to attend orientations and training events.

Responsibilities

The main responsibility of the teacher is to provide leadership structure during the large group teaching time. This is done by doing the following:

1. Pray and prepare during the week. Study the lesson and memory verse. Pray for the great opportunity God has given you to minister, and pray for the children and adults you will be addressing during the large group time.
2. Teach the Bible lesson. Pray as you open and close the lesson. We can do nothing apart from God. Focus on the basics of a good study:
 - Observe. Seek to involve the children in looking at the Bible for themselves. Help them discover the Who, What, When, Where. This may include using visuals, drawings, asking questions, group reading, etc. Know that you may not be able to cover every detail and ask God to help you focus on the most important things.
 - Interpret. What does this passage mean? Why did God write this for us? What does this passage teach me about God—who He is and what He is doing?
 - Apply. Help the children understand how to apply these biblical truths in their own lives. What does God want me to do by His Spirit's power? How can I honor Him more now that I have studied this passage of Scripture? The emphasis is on practical application, not theoretical discussion. This might include seeing how knowing this truth about God and what He has done or what He requires of us, applies to life at home with mom and dad and siblings, or at school, or with friends, or in their own private life, etc.
 - Although they are children, be careful not to lower the bar. They can understand much, but just as it is true for us, the goal is not simply knowledge, but obedience and worship of Christ.
 - See if there were ways God encouraged them during the past week regarding the previous week's lesson.

Team Leader

Description

They provide leadership and structure to the class time so that it stays on schedule and runs smoothly. They also help with the transition between activities. They ensure someone is taking roll and greeting parents, that the snack time is organized, and that an adult is ready to dismiss the children when class ends. They are responsible to make sure the class is cleaned up. Team Leaders must be members of Community Bible and attend periodic leadership meetings.

Responsibilities

The main purpose of the Team Leader is to provide leadership and structure to the class time. This is done by doing the following:

1. Pray that God will use you to help foster an environment of worship, teaching, prayer and fellowship. Be sure to study the lesson and memory verses so you can incorporate them into the entire time you are with the children.
2. Welcome the children as they transition between services. Ensure someone is taking roll and greeting parents.
3. Facilitate the time before worship begins. Talk to the children. See what they did this past week. Remind them of the memory verse. Make it fun but orderly. Have them stretch out and move around some if needed. Remember some of them will be “in class” for nearly 4 hours.
4. Help with the transition between activities, especially between large group teaching time and small group time. If appropriate, provide some guidance based on the large group teaching, as to what should be done during small group time.
5. Lead the last part of the class. Draw the kids back together after small group time. Have an adult pray for snacks. Ensure there is an orderly snack time.
6. Ensure one or two adults are ready to help dismiss the children. Make sure that kids are engaged as you wrap up the time.
7. Clean up and lock up the classroom.

Worship Leader

Description

Prepares and leads worship time, which varies in length and style depending on the age group. If they prefer, worship leaders are free to leave after the worship time; or they may lead worship in another class, lead a small group, or help in some other way.

Responsibilities

The main purpose of the Worship Leader is to provide leadership and structure during the worship time, seeking to magnify the glory of God and assist all in the classroom to grow in their devotion and love of Christ. This is done by doing the following:

1. Pray that God will use you to help foster an environment of worship, teaching, prayer and fellowship. Worship is definitely more than just singing songs.
2. Study the lesson and memory verse (both the one from the last week and the current one) so you can incorporate them into the worship time. Pray about what you might say at different points during the worship time.
3. Pick out songs, practice, and prepare song sheets or overheads if necessary. Think about whether there are any words or phrases that you may need to define or clarify for the children.
4. Come early enough to get set up properly.
5. Lead the worship time. Pray as you open that the Spirit of God might glorify Christ to the praise of the Father. Remind the children of why we worship and the importance of giving God the respect and honor that is due Him.
 - Be mindful of the loudness of your voice; lead strongly.
 - Help keep the children engaged by encouraging them to sing, letting some participate from up front, including songs with hand motions, etc.

Teacher Mentoring Program

One of our goals in the Children's Ministry department is to develop new teachers and help them grow into mature teachers who effectively impart spiritual truth to children. This is part of the disciple-making process, which our Lord commanded us to do (Matt 28:18-20). This was modeled by the apostle Paul, who told Timothy, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). Paul disciplined Timothy so effectively he could teach others what he learned. We have been called to reproduce our life in others: to take the things we have learned and teach it to faithful men and women, who will in turn pass it on to others.

It is both a tremendous privilege and a sobering responsibility to teach the most vulnerable and most impressionable members of our church. We want to be mindful not to stumble one of these little ones who believe in Jesus (Matt 18:6). Therefore, it is our goal to give the best training and mentoring for future teachers we are able to provide. Our aim is to help teachers develop their gifts, grow in their character, and to make sure they are doctrinally sound, so they know how to accurately handle the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15).

The goals of the Teacher Mentoring Program are:

- to encourage new teachers to teach spiritual truth in a God-honoring, Christ-exalting, Spirit-led, life-changing way;
- to offer specific, measurable suggestions for the growth of new teachers;
- to mentor intern teachers in that growth;
- to ensure that Community Bible Church maintains sound doctrine, philosophical unity, and teaching excellence in the classroom.

Each new teacher (intern) will be paired with an experienced seasoned teacher (mentor) who will provide instruction, feedback, and encouragement. In addition, we will provide the intern teacher specific training and opportunities for observation of effective teachers. The interns should see these training requirements as an opportunity for growth.

Each intern teacher will have an *Intern Teacher Training Form* outlining the steps they need to complete. In addition, each intern's team leader (or director) will have a *Training Check-Off Form* for each intern. When intern teachers have fulfilled a training requirement, it is their responsibility to inform the team leader or director. These requirements should be fulfilled within the first year of teaching.

Preparing to Be an Intern Teacher

There are at least three characteristics that we are looking for in intern teachers. The first is faithfulness. Paul told Timothy to entrust what he had learned to “faithful men” (2 Tim 2:2). To be faithful implies they have true faith. They love God and live for Christ who is their Lord. Faithfulness also describes someone who is trustworthy and reliable. For example, Jesus describes a faithful slave as one who is sensible and does what his master tells him to do even when his master is not there (Matt 24:45). They are self-motivated because they love Christ.

Before a person becomes an intern teacher, they should have proven themselves faithful in doing small tasks that their team leader has given them to do. As they learn to be faithful in little things, they will be faithful in much (Luke 16:10).

A second mark of an intern teacher is being teachable. Do they do what you ask them to do? Do they readily submit to leadership? Teachability and humility are possibly most clearly seen in how one responds to rebuke or admonishment. How do they receive criticism?

A third characteristic that we are looking for is spiritual appetite: do they have a desire to learn the word of God? Are they motivated to learn what God says and practice it? Paul told Timothy to take the things that he had heard and entrust them to faithful men (2 Tim 2:2). Timothy had heard, and thus learned things that he could then teach others. Interns should have a healthy appetite for the word of God. They should be self-disciplined in reading the word and motivated to learn the word by sitting under godly preaching and teaching. They are eager to be in Sunday school, the worship services, and a mid-week Home Fellowship Group so they can be fed and grow spiritually.

These are the kind of men and women we want to invest in: those who are faithful, teachable, and have a hunger to grow.

The Pattern of Mentoring Intern Teachers

Our Lord Jesus was the master disciple-maker. He gives us a pattern to follow in developing interns. There are at least three things Jesus emphasized in His training of the twelve. First, He lived out what He wanted them to do; He was an example to them. Second, He employed them in ministry; He gave them work to do. Third, He exhorted them; He instructed and corrected them.

Let’s briefly note these three things from John 4. Jesus was with His disciples traveling through Samaria. Jesus employed the disciples in ministry by sending them into town to buy food while He was resting by a well (John 4:8). This was a small task. Jesus was teaching them to be faithful in little things. Later He would send them off to preach. Later still, He would hand them the keys to the kingdom!

While they were gone, Jesus started talking to a Samaritan woman. He initiated the conversation (John 4:7), which astounded the woman (John 4:9). Jesus did this because He was concerned for her

soul. When the disciples arrived, they were stunned to see Jesus talking with a woman (John 4:27). He was being an example to them of how to do ministry. The gospel is open to everyone.

After the woman left, Jesus began to exhort and instruct His disciples as to what He was doing (John 4:34). He had come to do the Father's will which was to seek and save the lost. This is the pattern of mentoring interns: be an example; employ them in ministry; and exhort and instruct them.

The Particulars: How to Mentor Intern Teachers

The Model

Be an example: have him watch you.

Employ him in ministry: give him things to do. Start small, then as he proves himself faithful, give him more things to do.

- Give him an area of service
- Give him an opportunity to do part of the lesson
- Give him an opportunity to teach a whole lesson
- Give him his own class
- Give him interns to develop

Exhort him through this whole process: instruct and teach.

The Mentoring Process

Instruction and Training

Intern teachers not only need to learn how to teach from skilled teachers, they also need a correct understanding of doctrine, and have a grasp of our vision and goal for this ministry. Thus the following training is needed before they can become teachers:

- Read *Vision, Philosophy, and Theology: A Training Manual for Children's Ministry Workers*
- Listen to sermon by Phillip Foley entitled: *God's Heart in Glorifying Himself in the Coming Generations* (May 24, 2009)
- Attend *Foundations to Parenting Class One*
- Understand biblical doctrine by going through *Basic Bible Doctrine* (formerly known as *Discipleship Two*)
- Take and pass a *Doctrinal Test*
- Attend: "How to Study and Teach the Bible Class"
- Read: *Teaching Tips* by Phillip Foley
- For Nursery teachers: listen to *Teaching Big Truths to Little People** by Janice Baker (May 30, 2009)

- For Nursery and Preschool teachers: listen to *Teaching the Bible to Preschoolers** by Becky Foley (May 30, 2009)
- For Preschool teachers: listen to *Structuring Your Preschooler's Time** by Becky Foley (May 30, 2009)
- For Elementary teachers: listen to *How to Teach the Bible to Elementary School Age Kids** by Thomas Kawazoe (May 30, 2009)
- Regularly attend worship services (morning and evening), Sunday school, and a Home Fellowship Group

*available online at cbvallejo.org

Observation

If an intern is going to learn how to teach, he must have it modeled for him how to do it from good, experienced teachers.

- Observe mentor teacher on two different occasions, and discuss observations with him.
- Observe three other teachers and discuss observations with his mentor teacher.
- Practice teaching with feedback from mentor. (See *Teaching Feedback Summary Form*)
 - ▶ Have them do part of the lesson, with feedback from mentor teacher
 - ▶ Have them do a different part of the lesson, with feedback from mentor teacher
 - ▶ Have them teach half a lesson, with feedback from mentor teacher
 - ▶ Have them teach three complete lessons, with feedback from mentor teacher
 - ▶ Continue in the evaluating process until both the intern and mentor feel that mentoring is no longer necessary
 - ▶ Intern becomes teacher who then begins to mentor another intern with the oversight of the mentor teacher
 - ▶

The Responsibilities of the Mentor Teacher

The main responsibility of the mentor teacher is to offer positive feedback and suggestions for growth. This will take place primarily through formal observations as the intern observes your teaching, and you in turn, observe his.

The Process of Discipling Your Intern

The intern teacher will observe the mentor teacher twice and discuss their observations with the mentor teacher.

Choose one part of the lesson that the intern will teach. Instruct and tutor the intern on how to teach that section, and then teach the lesson with the intern teacher. Evaluate the teaching.

Choose a different part of the lesson and have the intern teach it. Instruct and tutor the intern on how to teach that section, and then teach the lesson with the intern. Evaluate the teaching.

Divide a lesson in two parts. Instruct and tutor the intern how to teach his part. Teach the lesson together and evaluate the teaching.

Have the intern teacher teach three lessons that you will formally evaluate.

Continue mentoring the intern teacher through instruction and feedback. Encourage the intern to observe you and give you feedback, and encourage them to complete the instruction and training requirements.

Observations

When observing your intern, you should be in the classroom the entire time. Have a copy of the lesson he is teaching that day. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you discernment so you can help your intern. Your goal is to help your intern grow in his ability to present the truths of Scripture in faithfulness.

Immediately following your observation (or as soon as possible), sit down with your intern and present him a summary of your observations. Begin with positive observations and comments! End by discussing some things they could improve upon, giving examples to help them understand your observations and how they can grow.

Only suggest one or two areas where they need to improve and give specific instruction as to how they can improve. Be sure to give your feedback in an encouraging tone. This should not be an intimidating experience. We want to help them grow as teachers and be more useful in their service to the children and others.

The following list is designed to help you think through the types of things you are looking for as you observe your intern.

Observation Areas

Preparation for Teaching

- Teacher has studied the Scripture passages carefully and prayerfully.
- Teacher has incorporated the lesson into his spiritual life.
- Teacher has prayed for audience ahead of time.
- Teacher has prepared for proper use of illustrations.
- Teacher has prepared for smooth teaching of the entire lesson.

The Teaching Time: Stylistic Issues

- Teacher was comfortable with audience.
- Teacher was comfortable in his delivery.
- Teacher was loud enough, clear enough, and slow enough for audience to hear and follow.
- Teacher used appropriate non-verbal communication.

- Teacher was appropriately energetic (passionate) in his delivery.
- Teacher was creative in his delivery.
- Teacher was able to keep the attention of his audience.
- Teacher clearly and effectively presented main teaching points.
- Teacher made appropriate emphasis of the main point.
- Teacher avoided unnecessary “rabbit trails” from the lesson.
- Teacher effectively involved audience in the learning process.
- Teacher used questions effectively.
- Teacher wisely handled incorrect responses.
- Teacher was attentive to the group dynamics.
- Teacher encouraged audience to respond to the truth taught.

The Teaching Time: Structural Issues

- Teacher was organized in his delivery.
- Teacher used the Scripture in his teaching.
- Teacher encouraged audience to look in their Bibles.
- Teacher made clear connections between the illustrations and the biblical truth.
- Teacher used illustrations effectively and efficiently.
- Teacher was able to relate the lesson to real life situations.
- Teacher faithfully represented the biblical text.

Teaching Feedback Summary Form

Intern Teacher:			Date:	
Observer: (Mentor teacher)			Lesson:	

KEY THEMES:

Category	Feedback
STRENGTHS	
AREA for Improvement	
STEPS for Improvement	

CM Intern Teacher Training Form

Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Instruction and Training:

- Read *Vision, Philosophy, and Theology: A Training Manual for Children's Ministry Workers*
- Listen to sermon by Phillip Foley entitled: *God's Heart in Glorifying Himself in the Coming Generations* (May 24, 2009)
- Attend: *Foundations to Parenting Class One*
- Understand biblical doctrine by going through *Basic Bible Doctrine* (formerly known as *Discipleship Two*)
- Take and pass a Doctrinal Test
- Attend: *How to Study and Teach the Bible Class*
- Attend: *How to Teach Christ from the Old Testament Class*
- Read: *Teaching Tips* by Phillip Foley
- For Nursery teachers: listen to *Teaching Big Truths to Little People** by Janice Baker (May 30, 2009)
- For Nursery and Preschool teachers: listen to *Teaching the Bible to Preschoolers** by Becky Foley (May 30, 2009)
- For Preschool teachers: listen to *Structuring Your Preschooler's Time** by Becky Foley (May 30, 2009)
- For Elementary teachers: listen to *How to Teach the Bible to Elementary School Age Kids** by Thomas Kawazoe (May 30, 2009)
- Must be a member of Community Bible Church
- Regularly attend worship services (morning and evening), Sunday school, and a Home Fellowship Group *available online at cbvallejo.org

Observation

- Observe mentor teacher twice and discuss observations with him.
- Observe other teachers and discuss observations with mentor teacher

Observation 1: Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Observation 2: Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Observation 3: Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

- Teach one part of a lesson with your mentor teacher; discuss your teaching experience and their evaluation of your teaching
- Teach a different part of a lesson with your mentor teacher; discuss your teaching experience and their evaluation of your teaching
- Teach half of a lesson with your mentor teacher; discuss your teaching experience and their evaluation of your teaching
- Teach three complete lessons; discuss your teaching experience and the evaluation of your teaching

First Lesson:

Second Lesson:

Third Lesson:

CM Training Check-Off Form

Name of Intern Teacher: _____

Team Leader: _____ Grade Level: _____

Instruction and Training:

- Read *Vision, Philosophy, and Theology: A Training Manual for Children's Ministry Workers*
- Listen to sermon by Phillip Foley entitled: *God's Heart in Glorifying Himself in the Coming Generations* (May 24, 2009)
- Attend *Foundations to Parenting Class One*
- Understand biblical doctrine by going through *Basic Bible Doctrine* (formerly known as *Discipleship Two*)
- Take and pass a Doctrinal Test
- Attend: "How to Study and Teach the Bible Class"
- Read: *Teaching Tips* by Phillip Foley
- For Nursery teachers: listen to the CD *Teaching Big Truths to Little People* by Janice Baker (May 30, 2009)
- For Nursery and Preschool teachers: listen to the CD *Teaching the Bible to Preschoolers* by Becky Foley (May 30, 2009)
- For Preschool teachers: listen to the CD *Structuring Your Preschooler's Time* by Becky Foley (May 30, 2009)
- For Elementary teachers: listen to the CD *How to Teach the Bible to Elementary School Age Kids* by Thomas Kawazoe (May 30, 2009)
- Regularly attend worship services (morning and evening, and Sunday school)

Observation

- Observe mentor teacher twice and discuss observations with him.
- Observe other teachers and discuss observations with mentor teacher

Observation 1: Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Observation 2: Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Observation 3: Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

- Teach one part of a lesson with your mentor teacher; discuss your teaching experience and their evaluation of your teaching
- Teach a different part of a lesson with your mentor teacher; discuss your teaching experience and their evaluation of your teaching
- Teach half of a lesson with your mentor teacher; discuss your teaching experience and their evaluation of your teaching
- Teach three complete lessons; discuss your teaching experience and the evaluation of your teaching

First Lesson:

Second Lesson:

Third Lesson:

1

CM Worker Screening Policy

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Every person applying to work in the Children's Ministry must be familiar with this policy and satisfactorily complete our screening procedures. This policy is motivated by several concerns:

- We believe that it will help us to guard the honor, reputation, and name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Recognizing God's tender love and concern for children (see Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16), we want to do all that we can to protect our children from any kind of mistreatment including physical or sexual abuse.
- Our church is not immune to the effects of sin, and it would be presumptuous for us to assume that physical or sexual abuse could never occur in our body. Therefore, while we should strive to be as "innocent as doves" we must also be as "shrewd as serpents" (Matt10:16), especially with regard to the children God has placed under our care.
- We want to protect our volunteer workers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a minor.
- We want to protect our church from the scandal and trauma that an incident of abuse could bring upon our congregation.

THE POLICY

- All applicants desiring to work with minors must have a completed application for Children's Ministry on file in the church office.
- All applicants are required to submit references from people who are not relatives or employees.
- All applicants will be interviewed by a qualified representative of the Children's Ministry Department.
- After applicants have been approved and assigned a ministry position, they will be asked to keep their ministry obligation and commitment.

THE SCREENING PROCESS

We view the screening process as an opportunity to promote body life (1 Cor 12:12-31), to demonstrate mutual submission (Eph 5:21), and to get to know one another better. By learning more about each other's gifts, abilities, and ministry goals, we can better encourage workers in their ministry to the children of Community Bible Church (Heb 10:24-25).

- *Personal Questions:* A few of the questions we ask in the screening process deal with unpleasant issues, such as the use of pornography and sexual misconduct. (You may answer these questions either in writing or during a private interview with a pastor or an elder.) One purpose is to identify those people who statistically are a higher risk to our children. Furthermore, God can use these questions to move some people to talk with a pastor or an elder about painful past experiences or embarrassing sin problems. These discussions can open the way for pastoral counseling, leading to a new freedom in the Lord. Answering "yes" to any of these questions may, but does not necessarily, disqualify a person for service in Children's Ministry.
- *Background Investigations* are conducted on all applicants 18 and older for volunteer staff positions. This investigation may include: (1) contacting churches or other organizations where the applicant has served; (2) requesting a criminal record check in this state and, if feasible, in states where the applicant has lived during the past several years.
- *Confidentiality:* All information acquired during the screening process is treated as confidential and will not be disclosed to others outside the immediate individuals involved in the screening process unless the elder in charge of screening or the elder board deems that limited disclosure is necessary.
- *Final approval* to work with children shall be made by a CBC elder/pastor.

We appreciate your cooperation in this screening process to ensure that our volunteer workers are well qualified for ministry to the children of our church. We look forward to working with you as you use your gifts and talents to nurture the children God has placed under our care. If you have any questions about this process, please feel free to talk with an elder or one of the directors of the Children's Ministry Department.

2

Teaching Tips: How to Teach a Bible Study

One of our tasks as a teacher and leader of a small group is to help those in our group understand the Scriptures. To do this we must learn to keep things simple. Charles Spurgeon said the following about 1 John 3:16 where it says, “He laid down His life for us.”

There is not one long word in that sentence; it is all as simple as it can be; and it is simple because it is sublime. Sublimity in thought always needs simplicity in words to express itself. Little thoughts require great words to explain them; little preachers need Latin words to convey their feeble ideas, but great thoughts and great expressers of those thoughts are content with little words.

John’s Greek is very simple: “He laid down His life for us,” yet it is very profound; it is deep!

Think about how people learn most concretely. How do they grasp or get the truth? Most people learn concretely when they can see or discover the truth for themselves and when it applies to them. For example when my son was younger and I was trying to teach him math for some reason he was having trouble with his two’s. When I would ask him what was $7 + 2$, he had a hard time figuring it out. So we got some blocks and when I asked him what was $7 + 2$, he would get his 7 block and his 2 block and put them together and see that they make a 9 block. Then I made it applicable: you are now seven, how old will you be in two years? (Kids always want to be older). Or we put it in money value: $5 + 3 = ?$ If you had \$5 and you made \$3, how much would you have? For people to learn concretely they must learn to see it for themselves and know how it applies to them.

Teaching Is an Art

It is something you need to learn how to do. What is the goal of our teaching time? We want people or children in our group to discover truth and we want them to apply this truth. The goal is to teach them to *observe* all of Christ’s commands.

The Method of Teaching

How do we go about reaching our goal? There are basically two ways:

Lecture

Most of us have a tendency to do this. We study many hours. We pour over a passage. We pray over the passage. God shows us some nuggets that we cannot wait to share with others. It becomes a lecture instead of a ***discussion***. Another reason we lecture is because it is more comfortable to teach than discuss. Someone might ask a tough question that we do not have the answer to. Also, another reason we lecture is that this is what is modeled from the pulpit. When someone preaches he does not ask questions; he simply proclaims the truth and we sit and listen. A study of the New Testament reveals that preaching and proclamation are the method God has chosen to get the gospel out. What is lacking with this thinking in regard to teaching a small group? In our small group Bible studies (discipleship, Home Fellowship Groups, Children's Ministry, and Sunday School) we are not preaching per se, we are teaching and teaching is different than preaching. (This is not to say there will be no preaching in your teaching!)

Discussion

The ideal then is to have a discussion but it must be a directed discussion not a free for all. You do not want a discussion where everyone expresses their views about what they think the passage means. Guard against this. Learn to direct the discussion. You need to teach and discuss what is true and expose what is not true. So it needs to be a directed discussion. You should have definite goals in mind. There should be truths that you have discovered that you want to help the group discover. The objective is to lead the discussion down a path. You should confirm the insightful comments and gently turn the focus of the group away from the ones which are not as insightful.

In summary, we want our Bible study to be in 3-D: It should involve a ***discussion***. You want interaction and not lecture. There needs to be ***direction***. It cannot be a free for all where everyone is giving their opinion. It is a discussion that is led by a leader. It should also involve ***discovery***. The goal is for the group to discover the truth of the passage and apply it.

Let's talk about how to do this.

The Key to Successful Teaching

The key to pull off a good discussion is the skillful use of questions. Good questions stimulate discussion; poor questions stall it. Now I must warn you that in leading a Bible study like this there is a certain amount of unpredictability. You have no idea how people will respond. Sometimes you will get good answers and other times you will get off-the-wall answers. How do you handle these? You need to learn to think on your feet. You must learn to react properly to the bizarre comments. You must learn to know when to interrupt someone who is dominating. You must also learn how to tie the threads of discussion together into a meaningful whole. It takes time to learn how to do this, sometimes years. So do not get discouraged; keep working at it. But you need to learn how to do this because it is the key to helping people discover truth for themselves.

Occasionally, we have guest speakers teach our Sunday school class. Usually they are missionaries. I will tell them to feel free to ask questions as they teach. The people are used to it. So I will encourage them to get people involved. I have noticed something. One of two things usually happens. The person will not ask any questions and lecture the whole time. Or, they will attempt to ask some questions at the beginning, but because they are not good questions no one responds; so they give up and end up lecturing. Asking good questions is something you need to learn how to do.

A Suggested Approach

There are three parts that make up a successful Bible study. A profitable study will blend each of these: it will include **observation**: what does the passage say, or say what? It will include **interpretation**: what does it mean, or now what? And it will include **application**: how does it relate to me, or so what? There should be a blend of each of these components every time you teach.

Observation

What does the passage say? You want the group to gain familiarity with the text. Let's look at an example of how to do this from Ephesians 6:18-20. Paul writes:

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

After reading this, you could ask, "Who is speaking? Who is he writing to? Who is in the passage?" This orients your audience to the principle players in the passage. You may also want to ask, "When did this letter take place—when in history, when in the life of Paul?" "Where was the letter written from?" All of these questions help set the context of what is written.

Then you can ask, "What are some of the things that stand out to you in this passage?" Paul is talking about prayer: how to pray and what to pray for. After discussing what the passage is about, you could ask, "Does anyone know how this relates to the context?" The apostle is in the midst of talking about spiritual warfare.

Some passages that you teach you can plunge right into (like this one). Others, like narratives, may need some explanation. After reading through a narrative it might be helpful to have someone re-tell the story and then have others fill in as he goes (pick someone who would feel comfortable doing this). Occasionally with some passages you might have to fill in some historical information that has bearing on the passage. For example if you are teaching through Ruth, it might be helpful to know that it took place in the time of Judges, when everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Or if you are teaching through Nehemiah it would be helpful to know when in history that story takes place.

During the observation stage you want your group to get familiar with the text. You want to ask

general observation questions like I mentioned above: **What questions:** What stands out to you in this passage? What strikes you in this passage? What comments or questions do you have regarding this text? Is there anything you want to comment on about this passage? You do not want to ask restrictive questions like: what *one* thing is Paul emphasizing here? People will not respond, because they are fearful of giving the wrong answer. Make the questions more open ended, more general.

You are not seeking to elicit a particular response at this stage. You want them to make some general observations of the text. Now if a particular observation is shared that you want to focus on, then that leads to the next stage. When is it time to move on? When is the right time? Pray for wisdom. Usually it will be when someone shares something you want to discuss further. Sometimes the first person may mention the exact thing I want to talk about, but I still elicit other responses. I want to get people into the text and familiar with the text.

Another thing: you will want to acknowledge every comment that is made even though it may be wrong! In the observation stage you are not primarily concerned to establish truth but to generate involvement. We will get to how to handle wrong answers later. If they have not hit on that nugget of truth that is staring them in the face you can respond to their comments with: “Good, what other things do you see?” This keeps them looking in the text and hopefully they will discover the truth that is right before them. What if you ask a question and get no response? What should you do then? You wait them out! You do not panic. Repeat the question if necessary or reword the question. Also, remember who said what. This is important because when discussing later you should give them credit for what they said. This will encourage them and increase their desire to contribute to the discussion.

Interpretation

You probably will not spend much time in the observation stage while you are teaching because usually you will want to get moving in the passage. In the interpretation stage you want to find out what the passage means. You are looking for specific insight. Right or wrong answers may be given. You need to establish the right answers and gently distinguish these from the wrong ones. Ask good questions. What makes a question good? A good question gets them into the text and it may require some thought. In other words it is not something that is blatantly obvious.

Look again at Eph 6:18-20. Do you see any words or ideas repeated in verse 18? **Prayer** and **all** are repeated. What do you think Paul is emphasizing about prayer by the use of the word **all**? Think about the context (spiritual warfare). Prayer is for every occasion especially in the midst of spiritual warfare, which is on going all the time. We should keep up constant times of prayer and be consistent in them. We are to be devoted to prayer. It needs to be a priority. But we cannot restrict ourselves to just regular times of prayer. Paul says to pray at all times. There will be times of sudden prayer, like Nehemiah before the king (cf. Neh 2:4).

Does Paul give us any specifics of how we are to pray and if so, what are they? *We are to pray at all times*. How do we do this? Can you think of any other verses that may relate to this? Pray without ceasing (1 The 5:17); be devoted to prayer (Col 4:2).

We are to pray in the Spirit. What does this mean? What will this type of prayer look like? The Spirit's main ministry on the earth today is to glorify Christ, so praying in the Spirit means we will have Christ-centered prayers, Christ-glorifying prayers.

We are to pray for others. Why do you think Paul tells us to be on the alert and persevere in our prayer for others? We are to pray for others because they are in the midst of the battle as well. What does perseverance suggest about prayer? We will have to work to pray.

What is the difference between prayer and petition? **Prayer** has to do with prayer in general. He is talking about the general aspect and attitude of devotion to God, which might include adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. **Petition** could be translated entreaty or supplication. It is a more direct term than **prayer**. It is a special branch of prayer which involves earnest petition. It has the idea of earnestness and fervency as you cry out to God.

In summary, start with general observation questions. As the discussion gets rolling, it will not be long before someone says something that pertains to a specific question that you had in mind. When that person says that you might want to say something like, "I think you have brought up a good point. Let's discuss that a bit further. What do you think Paul means by this statement?" You have a question that you have planned all along but it was brought up when someone else drew attention to it. They are beginning to discover truth for themselves.

The questions you should use most frequently are: what things strike you in this passage; what did he mean by this; why did the author say this; and what else do you see?

Application

The third component that makes for a successful Bible study is application. How does this relate to me? In other words, so what? We have looked at what did Paul say, and what did he mean. Now we want to look at what does it mean to me? I am giving you a logical order for how to teach but not necessarily a chronological order. In other words, you do not have to save all application to the end. You should address application as it comes up.

There are two types of application questions. There are **general application** questions that are open-ended. You leave it up to the people in your group to determine how this might apply to them. You might ask, "What are some of the implications of this passage (Eph 6:18-20) for your life?" There are also **specific application** questions. How does it apply to specific situations? You might ask, "How does this passage relate to how we are to pray for those who proclaim the gospel? In view of your own prayer life, are there some things that you need to change?" You may also want to ask, "What does God want you to do? How can you obey what God is saying?"

Concluding

How do you conclude? You summarize the main points of application. We have looked briefly at four things about prayer. We have seen the **character** of prayer; we are to be praying at our prayers. We are to have **continual** prayer; we are to pray at all times for all areas of life. We are to have

Christ-centered prayers; we are to pray in the Spirit for His will. We are to have *concerning* prayers; we are to pray for others. Another way to summarize this passage is: we are to pray for souls, saints and sermons.

To summarize: the ideal to having a good Bible study is to have a *directed discussion* that allows people to *discover* truth for themselves. So Bible study should be in 3D. It should be a discussion. It should be a directed discussion. It cannot be a free for all. You must lead it and give it direction. It should also involve discovery, where people are discovering truth for themselves and how to apply it. We want to feed them, teach them, and then show them how to feed themselves.

How to Handle Problems

What happens when someone gives you a wrong answer? Or what do you do when people get off the point of the passage and start down some rabbit trail? Or what if you have some person who dominates and answers every single question? Again, what I would like to do is take you through a passage that may have some problems in it and show you how to handle those.

Now remember Bible study should have three components: observation, interpretation and application.

Observation

The objective of this stage is that you want to answer the question: what does the passage say? The goal at this point is to gain familiarity with the passage.

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (2 Cor 5:14-15)

You start by asking observation questions: “What stands out to you in these verses? Is there anything in this passage that grabs your attention? What else do you see?” Remember to acknowledge each response. Wait for people to respond. Do not panic. Ask the question in a different way. And remember who said what.

Interpretation

This answers the question: what does the passage mean? Paul says that the love of Christ was controlling him. What does this mean when he says ‘the love of Christ’? How could you take this? Does this mean Paul’s love for Christ controlled him or does this mean Christ’s love for Paul controlled him?

In the verse Paul says that he has come to a conclusion about some things. This word *conclusion* means to make a decision, to render a judgment. In other words, he has weighed out some things that he knows to be true. What are some of those things?

Paul talks about the things Christ has done for him. He is talking about how Christ demonstrated His love for Paul. He died for me. And because He died for me, I am to live for Him. So when he says that the love of Christ controls us, I take that to mean that it is Christ's love for us that controls us. He died for me. The love starts with Him. The reason we love Him is because He first loved us. Paul is saying: look at what Christ did for me. He is concluding this. He has thought through these things. So because Christ loves us, His love controls us.

The word *control* means constrain. It means to hold together or press together. It is the pressure that confines as well as controls. My children used to have a little wooden puzzle made of a number of different pieces. If you held it tightly together, you could pick it up and it would not fall apart. The pressure you put on the pieces constrained it from falling apart. This is the idea of the word *control*. Christ's love constrains us to live a certain way. Understanding who Christ is and what He has done for us will restrict us to want to live for Him. His love holds us in its grip. So powerful is its influence that we have no choice but to live a life of loving service to Him and to others.

How does the love of Christ constrain Paul? His desire is to live for Christ and not for himself. Meditating on the love of Christ and reminding yourself of His love promotes the desire in the Christian to want to live for Christ.

In verse 14, Paul says, "One died for all." Who is he speaking about?

How to Handle Wrong Answers

What do you do if someone suggests an interpretation which is clearly or at least probably wrong? There are two ways to respond depending on how wrong it is.

The first response could go something like this: "Bob has suggested that Paul is talking about Adam here, what do the rest of you think? Could he be speaking about someone else?" Or you could simply acknowledge the contribution and say, "Thanks Bob, what do the rest of you think?" This allows the group to continue to suggest options until you land on the one that is correct. Then you affirm the correct response. What this does is quietly dismiss the earlier responses but does so indirectly. You are not being offensive to people and you are not discouraging them from participating in the discussion. This also establishes the best interpretation by your direct confirmation. You are directing the teaching and interpretation but your group is discovering the truth for themselves. Whatever you do, do not torpedo each successive wrong response.

A second response is to an answer that is definitely wrong. You could say something like, "Now, that is a good suggestion, but I am not sure that is what Paul had in mind here." You have acknowledged the contribution but have done it softly. You have commended it by calling it good (only call it good if it is!). If it is defensible, acknowledge that. By saying, "I am not sure," is softened and better than saying, "No, that is wrong!" Or "What kind of bozo answer is that?" You want to gently reflect the wrong answers, otherwise you will have a group that never responds and never asks questions. Eventually they will leave. They want to go to a place where they can ask questions and where they can respond. Remember people learn the most concretely when they discover truth for themselves.

The goal is to establish the best interpretation but do it in a way that gently disposes of less accurate ones but that also does not reflect rejection of the person who offered it.

What do you do when you get an off-the-wall comment? There is one of two ways to handle this depending on the person and what was said. You should repeat the comment to make sure you heard it correctly and then ask the person how his comment relates to the passage. “Help me see where you are getting this from the text.” Or if it is someone who normally has off-the-wall questions, you could say something like, “That is interesting, what other things do you see?”

What Do You Do About Tough Questions?

If you are like me, I am not quick on my feet. Sometimes what I do is throw the question back out to the group: “That is an interesting question. What do the rest of you think?” This gives you time to formulate a response of your own. I was teaching a Sunday School class one time and a brother sitting in the front row said that he disagreed with what I was teaching and believed that a person could lose his salvation. How do you respond to that in front of thirty people? I threw the question back out to the group and asked what they thought. We had some great responses. This gave an opportunity for those in the class to think of verses that taught on eternal security. This also gave me opportunity to think of some passages that I could share. I do not think we convinced this man but it was one of the most blessed Sunday school classes we ever had, because the class was given an opportunity to defend what they believed.

Rabbit Trails

In the passage above Paul tells us that Christ died for all (2 Cor 5;14-15). Who do you think He means by this? Who are the *all*? This question leads down the rabbit trail of limited atonement. The question is, do you want to take it? When coming to a rabbit trail learn to use discernment. Be careful not to stray too far from the passage you are studying.

When people raise questions that lead to rabbit trails, be considerate and do not cut them off. Obviously this is probably a question that is important to them. Give a brief response and offer to talk to them later. “I see what you are saying there, and I think it is an important subject, however I think it takes us a little away from the passage right here. Would you mind if we talked a bit further about it after study?” In this way you have affirmed that it is important and you have communicated interest in it by saying that you will follow up on it later. But you have also not allowed the group to be led away from the passage and the central thought of the passage. I had a brother who constantly asked questions like this in Sunday School. Sometimes I would answer his questions. At other times I would tell him I would talk to him later. Pray for discernment on which trails to take.

In this passage you would probably want to deal with limited atonement because it is of great significance to the text. Christ died for all. Think about that statement. Christ is God, Lord, King; He is glorious, majestic, sovereign. This is the one who died for us. Think about the love of such a one for sinners that He would lay aside His glory and majesty to become a man to die in our place. This is why the love of Christ constrained Paul.

Now, Paul says that Christ died for all. Who are the all? We know that Paul can not be talking about the whole world. He is talking about how the love of Christ controls *us*. Who are the us? They are Paul, his associates and possibly the Corinthians. Also, when Paul says that “one died for all,” the result is that all died. If the “one” refers to Christ, then the “all” cannot possibly be the whole world because he is talking about being identified in Christ’s death. Because Christ died, we died with Him. This can only mean the ones that He died for. Also, in verse 15, the “all” that Christ died for are the ones who live for Him. They live for Him because He died and rose again on their behalf. Obviously the “all” is not the whole world but for those for whom He has died. This is why Paul says that the love of Christ constrains him. Christ died for His people. He had particular people in mind. And when Christ died for us, we died with Him. He died for our sin. We died to sin too. And He died for us so that we might live for Him. Incredible truth here, isn’t it? It should motivate us, captivate us to want to live for Him.

Before we finish, let’s talk about one more problem that we may encounter.

What Do You Do About the Person Who Dominates?

This is the person who answers every question. Two things you can do. First, you could say something like, “Thanks Steve, what do the rest of you see?” You direct the question away from them. And depending upon the person you could say something like, “Okay, everybody but Chris can answer this question.” This is very direct and should be used for only people you know well.

If the person persists in being dominant then you should talk to him privately after the study. Acknowledge their eagerness and zeal and remind them that you want all to participate. Ask them to help you to let others get involved by keeping quiet.

Related to this is the person who rambles on and on and on. I have had people who would tell a story and ramble on for ten minutes. I only have 30-40 minutes to teach. One third of the time spent for teaching is taken up by one person rambling on. What do you do? This is probably the hardest thing to do but you need to get in there and cut them off. If you do not do this and allow it to go on week after week, it will kill your group.

Application

The last step is application. How does this apply to me? What happens to the person that Christ has died for? They should no longer be living *just* for themselves. Paul does not say that does he? We like to add the word ‘just,’ but it is not in the text. We should no longer be living for ourselves. We should be living for Christ. Our lives should be spent in His service. What are some of the implications of this passage for our own lives? What are some concrete ways you can let the love of Christ control you?