

Chapter 6

BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

You have been elected as the Children's Ministries Coordinator in your local church and you sincerely want to accomplish something for the Lord, for the children, and for your church. You want to succeed in this ministry and God wants you to succeed too. So at the outset make Him your partner and seek His guidance.

It is important that the Children's Ministries Coordinator knows where he or she is going. Don't be too hasty in launching straight into programs and activities.

CREATING A VISION

The Children's Ministries Coordinator must envision what the ministry can accomplish through God's power. Vision is crucial to effective ministry. It allows you to look ahead and plan with a purpose. But it is never an easy task.



Every ministry should focus on the Great Commission. We are called to fulfill: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV).

So, your ministry vision should be a picture of how you will fulfill the Great Commission in children's ministries. Such a vision will have 4 parts, according to Steve Alley, author of *Growing a Healthy Children's Ministry*:²

"Go": How will you become aware and involved in today's child's world? How will you go to them? What is your plan of evangelism?

"Make disciples": How will you attract the children and interest them in Jesus?

"Baptizing them": How will you lead children to make a personal commitment to Jesus?

"Teaching them": How will you teach today's children in a way that interests and motivates them to learn more on their own? How will you help them grow in faith?

"To obey": How will you disciple the children and lead them to obedience and service? How will they be inspired to teach others?

George Barna, in *The Power of Vision*, describes deadly traps that can ambush visionaries in the ministry, five of which are tradition, fear, fatigue, complacency, and

short-term thinking.³ Tradition can snare us (“We’ve always done it this way!”), and so can fear (“How can I run this program when so few parents support us?”). Complacency can lead to non-action (“I don’t really care, my kids are all grown up”), and fatigue (“I am giving up! I’ve been at this for ten years and nothing has changed”). And finally, short-term thinking (“Let’s do something now; we don’t have time to worry about next year!”) can snuff out effective ministry.

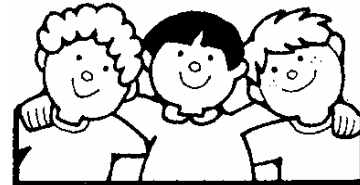
CONSIDERING NEEDS

Part of developing a vision for children’s ministries is to consider the needs of the children in your church so that you can tailor your programs to meet them. Don’t rush too quickly into programming just to have something to show to the church. Children are our prime consideration.

Children are individuals with emotional, social, physical, spiritual and mental needs. They are not miniature adults. They all need love and care. They need to be free to play, explore, create and express themselves. They need to be instructed with the right values and be challenged to learn and master new skills and knowledge. When they are in our care, we need to offer a safe environment where children feel welcomed, valued and accepted.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

It is essential for the Children’s Ministries Coordinator to know the people in the church so that they can catch your vision and provide support for your programs. It is often who you know that help make your programs fly.



- Talk to the pastor about your mission for the church and your vision for Children’s Ministries.
- Find out who the key people are and share your concerns with them. Listen to their advice.
- Get to know the members of the church board and learn how things get done in your church.
- Get acquainted with parents who have children in the Sabbath School divisions.

² Barna, George, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 122-129.

³ Alley, Steve, *Growing a Healthy Children’s Ministry* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2002), 31.