

2 How well is your house built?



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Look at your children's ministry program as a house. The foundation has to be The Bible and Jesus Christ. Upon that you build your walls of worship, fellowship, discipleship, and stewardship. While not every program your church provides for children will contain all four pillars, the ministry as a whole must incorporate each pillar.

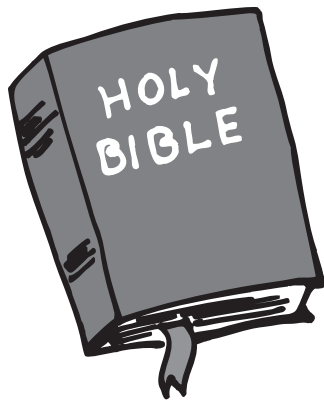
For instance –

Sunday school might be your strong discipleship and fellowship time. Kids are instructed in the doctrines and basic beliefs of the faith and given an opportunity in a small group setting to connect with other kids and develop a relationship with the teacher.

Children's Church might provide a solid worship experience for the children, modeling the different aspects of worship and allowing them to be active worship participants as well as providing stewardship opportunities – ways they can use their gifts and talents to serve (special singing, leading songs, puppet skits, running electronics, doing skits, etc.)

Midweek is a good opportunity to emphasize fellowship, allowing the students a more casual atmosphere to interact with one another and develop good friendships with fellow Christians. Midweek is also a good time to provide students different opportunities for stewardship – giving to missions, serving in the community, developing their gifts and talents; and is a good entry point for them to invite friends – evangelizing.

How well are you doing? Let's begin with the foundation.



“All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work...I give you this charge:

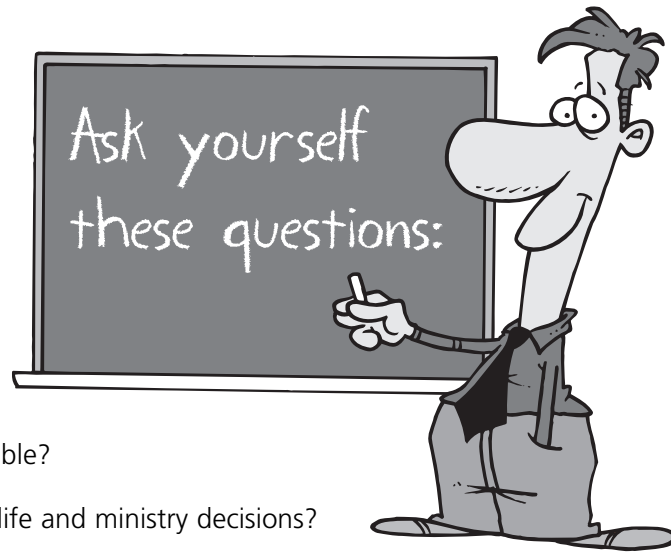
Preach the Word”

(2 Timothy 3:16,17, 4:2)

BiBLE BASED -

The Bible needs to be the basis for all you teach. It is the textbook. Children need to learn how to use the Bible, memorize Scripture, become familiar with its stories and lessons, and learn how to apply it to their lives.

Look at each area of your children’s ministry, is the Bible the foundation for all they are teaching and doing?



- Y N Do you regularly read your Bible?
- Y N Do you consult the Bible for life and ministry decisions?
- Y N Do your teachers have regular Bible devotions?
- Y N Do your teachers use the Bible for their lesson preparations?
- Y N Do your teachers have a good grasp of basic Biblical understanding?
- Y N Does the teacher use a Bible to teach lessons from?
- Y N Does the teacher refer to the Bible when making a point, sharing a truth?
- Y N Does the teacher read to the students from the Bible?
- Y N Are students instructed on how to care for the Bible?
- Y N Do they know it is God's written word to us?
- Y N Do they know it is true?
- Y N Do they know that although it was written thousands of years ago, it tells us how to live today?
- Y N Do students bring their Bibles to class?
- Y N Are students encouraged to locate texts, read, and refer to the Bible?
- Y N Are the students taught how to study the Bible?
- Y N Are students encouraged to have personal Bible devotions?
- Y N Is Scripture memory a key ingredient in your ministry?

“And whatever you do,
whether in word or deed, do it
all in the name of the Lord
Jesus, giving thanks to God
the Father through him.”

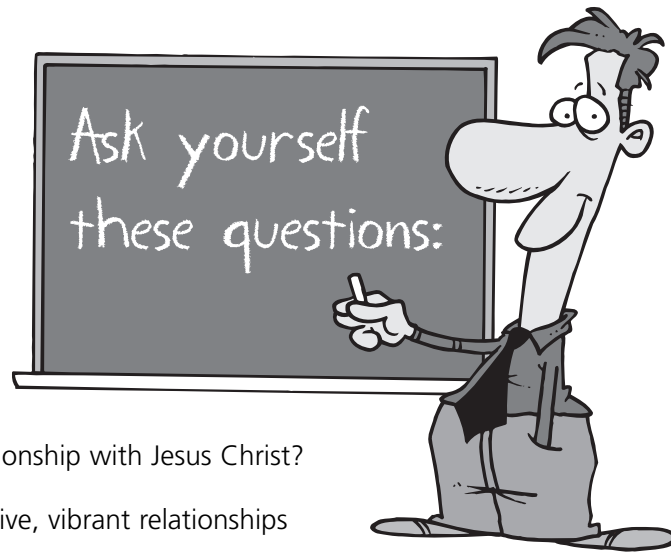
(Col. 3:17)



CHRIST-CENTERED -

The Bible is the textbook and Jesus Christ is the example. Everything done in your ministry should be done to introduce the students to Jesus Christ; help them develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; and disciple them in His teachings, actions and words.

Look at your children's ministry, is it Christ-centered?



- Y N Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
- Y N Do all your teachers have active, vibrant relationships with Jesus Christ?
- Y N Is Christ's love evident in you?
- Y N Is Christ's love evident in your teachers?
- Y N Do the students in your ministry know you and their teacher love them?
- Y N Do your students know that Jesus Christ loves them?
- Y N Do your students understand that Jesus can be their forever friend?
- Y N Is it demonstrated how to have a friendship with Jesus?
- Y N Do you teach Christ's miraculous birth, death and resurrection?
- Y N Are students taught what miracles Jesus did while on earth?
- Y N Are students shown what Jesus taught – are they familiar with His words?
- Y N Do students know why Jesus came to earth?
- Y N Do they understand what Jesus' death on the cross means to them personally?
- Y N Do they know where Jesus is now?
- Y N Do they know that Jesus is coming back to earth some day?

If you answered many more yes than no, your foundation is solid and your house will stand. If you answered no to any of the questions – consider how you can make an adjustment to turn the no to yes. If you had many no in either section, you need to make serious changes.

The first change has to begin with you. The level of your personal commitment and depth of your relationship with Christ will determine the level and depth of your ministry. As the old adage goes, “You can only take them as far as you’ve gone yourself.”

The next change is in your volunteers. It takes a great deal of time to get to know the people who are directly working with the children, but it must happen. Keep them accountable, set a good example, provide training and good material, and know where they are and when they need a break. Overworked and under-appreciated volunteers can create a weak foundation. Strong, happy workers will make for a much easier ministry environment.

The last change is in the communication style. Perhaps your programs need changed, curriculum needs replaced, or intentionality needs to occur. We sometimes tend to go along without really looking at what we’re doing and why. “Because we’ve always done it this way” is not a good reason for doing anything. Assess each program, the entire curriculum, and the approach to teaching.

“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker,

for he is our God and we

are the people of his

pasture, the flock under

his care.” (Psalm 95:6-7)

PILLAR #1 – WORSHIP

Worship is God communicating with us and us communicating with God. There are lots of things we do

in children’s church, Sunday school, and midweek with

kids. Not all of them are part of worship and that is fine. The question is, do we know what elements could be used for worship and do we use them effectively?

When do you demonstrate worship?

When do your kids participate in worship?

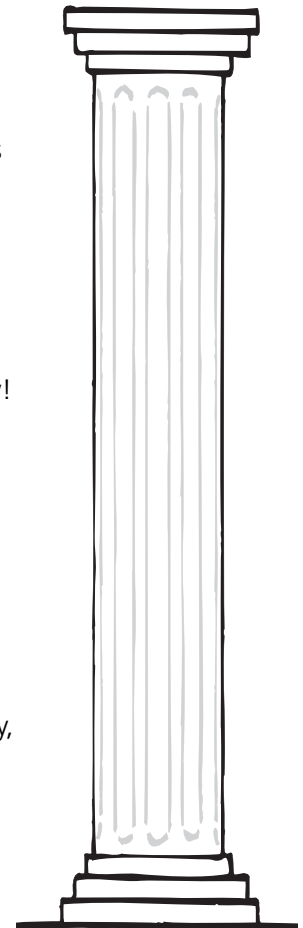
What elements do you include in the worship experience?

Think of three other ways God can communicate with us:

Think of three other ways we can communicate with God:

The thought had been that children’s church was practice for adult worship. It’s not. Children’s church should be a meaningful worship experience for children done on a level they can understand and participate in. Will it have some common elements as adult worship? Yes. Will having participated in corporate worship in a children’s church setting prepare kids to effectively participate in adult corporate worship? Yes. But it is not practice – Children can worship now!

Do we know that worship begins before we ever get to church? We have to prepare our hearts and minds in order to worship. Sleeping in, yelling at your kids, running in late, searching for the markers, setting up the chairs, and grumbling about the condition the youth pastor left the room in aren’t good precursors to worship. How can we make sure that we are in the right frame of mind and heart to lead others into worship? Preplan, prepare ahead of time, pray, spend time alone with God, breath deeply, and let some unimportant things go.





How are we to worship?

With reverence and awe - respectfully: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." " (Heb. 12:28-29)

With our heart, mind and will – actively: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1)

With joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and praise: "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." (Psalm 100)



- Y N Do you understand what it means to worship?
- Y N Do you regularly participate in corporate worship yourself?
- Y N Do you intentionally prepare your heart and mind prior to leading worship?
- Y N Do you deliberately incorporate worship into at least one program of your children's ministry?
- Y N Do you model for the children how to worship?
- Y N Do your children understand what worship is?
- Y N Do you include various elements into the worship experience?
- Y N Does your worship include more than music?
- Y N Is your worship joyful?
- Y N Is your worship respectful?
- Y N Is your worship active?

Pillar #2 – Fellowship

is sharing things in common with others. What is our common ground? Christ.

When believers share in each others lives through hearing about needs and praises, sharing meal times together, praying together, and having worship together; the body of Christ is strengthened and so are we. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship...” (Acts 2:42)

How do we fellowship?

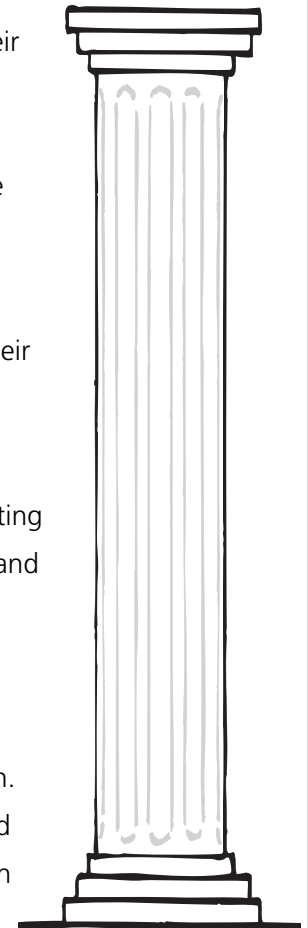
1. “...to the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42), “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.” (v. 46) – Corporate Worship.
2. “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.” (v.44-45) – Caring for Needs
3. “...They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” (Acts 2:46b) Sharing in meals

Kids need to have relationships. They need opportunity to form relationships with adults and with each other. The church needs to meet all their needs and social needs are very important.

Teachers need to spend time getting to know their students. We need to understand what is happening in their lives and getting a sense for what their needs are. Having an adult take time to listen to them and ask personal questions makes a huge impact on kids. They like to know they matter and you care – what a great way to demonstrate that.

Your students also need a chance to interact with each other. At all stages of development, children enjoy being with other children. Your ministry needs to provide them opportunities to fulfill that social need and give them an opportunity to create friendships within church, with other kids in which they share something in common – Jesus.

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.” (1 John 1:7)





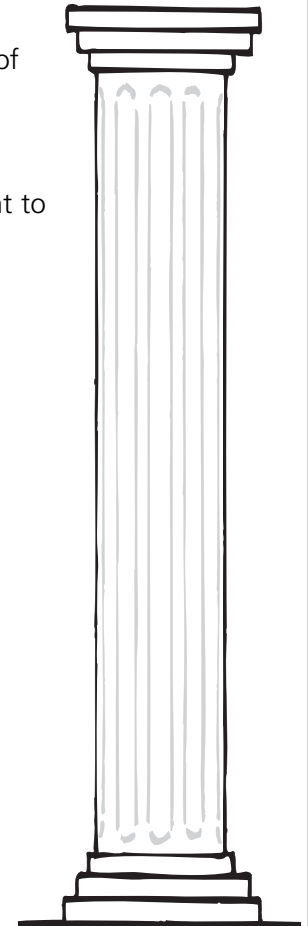
- Y N Do you spend time in fellowship with other believers?
- Y N Do your students have opportunity to fellowship together?
- Y N Do you create an atmosphere where they can share their needs and concerns?
- Y N Is there opportunity to eat together?
- Y N Do your kids enjoy talking to each other?
- Y N Do your teachers take time to talk to their students?
- Y N Do the teachers know each student personally?
- Y N Do you intentionally plan time into your programs for relationship building and fellowship?
- Y N Do your students have friendships within the church?

“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.”

(Matt. 28:19-20)

Pillar #3 – Discipleship

A disciple (according to Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary) is “a student, learner, or pupil...follower of Jesus.” It is our job to introduce the children to Jesus and then help them in their journey of becoming a disciple. Trained educators know that the primary purpose of education is to create life-long learners. So, too, with children’s ministry – our purpose is to create life-long disciples, or students of Jesus. Children who want to grow closer to Him and know Him more.



In order to achieve a life of learning, development, growth, and maturity, what are the key elements we need to instill in our children, teach our children to practice?

The same things that are vital in our own lives:

A love for The Word

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to our word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:9, 11)

“All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

An appreciation for The Church

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Col. 3:15-16)

“All the believers were together and had everything in common.” (Acts 2:44)

An understanding of Christ’s life, actions and words

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

Active communication with The Father

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” (Col. 4:2)

An awareness of the Holy Spirit and His work in their life

“The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 15:26)

“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.” (John 16:8)

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:13)

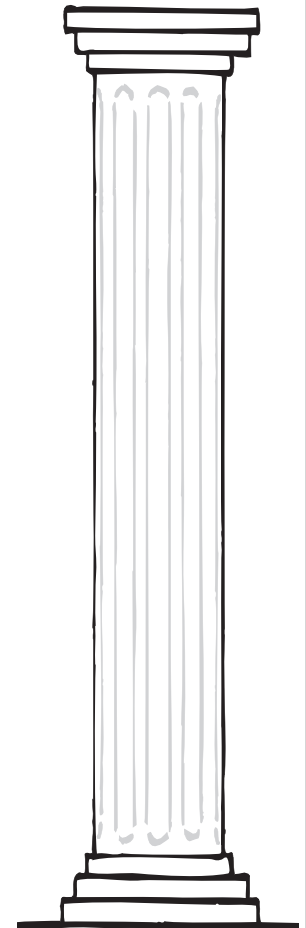


- Y N Are you a disciple of Christ?
- Y N Do you actively pursue a deeper knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ?
- Y N Do you strive to create an atmosphere in your classes where learning is valued?
- Y N Do you create a love for The Word and a thirst to read it within your students?
- Y N Do your students have an appreciation for The Church and their church?
- Y N Do your students understand the value of active church participation?
- Y N Is the story of Christ's birth, death and resurrection shared often and known well?
- Y N Do you present Christ's life and teaching as our example?
- Y N Do you pray with your students?
- Y N Do you involve the students in prayer?
- Y N Do the students understand how to pray, when to pray, what to pray as taught in the Bible?
- Y N Do you have a comfortable understanding of the work of The Holy Spirit?
- Y N Is the Holy Spirit alive and working through you?
- Y N Do your students understand (as much as they can) that the Holy Spirit is our helper and guide?
- Y N Do your students know that growth in Christ is a life-long process that we must pursue every day?

Pillar #4 – Stewardship is giving of our time, talents, and tithes for the uplifting and expanding of God’s Kingdom.

Stewardship is a key element in the spiritual formation of children. Providing them with a Biblical understanding of stewardship and opportunities to practice stewardship will lay the groundwork for a life well lived – a life of stewardship.

So true is the thought that habits are formed when we’re young – we get use to doing something and then it becomes second nature. How wonderful to create an atmosphere where stewardship becomes second nature.






Stewardship of our Tithe - Of what we own

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, "says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." (Malachi 3:10)

"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord." (Lev. 27:30)

"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops;" (Proverbs 3:9)

Everything we have belongs to God. We teach that easily – we teach creation and that He has given us everything we have. But do we teach stewardship? Your students need to know:

-  He has blessed us with a wealth of things and resources. All He asks in return is a tithe or ten percent. He promises that when we live a life of stewardship with our resources by giving back to Him our tithe, we will be blessed beyond what we can hold. In fact He says to test Him – try it and see if He does as promised.
-  The ten percent we give is to be from off the top – the best – or the "first fruits". Not what's left over at the end of the month, not the stuff we don't want or need, but our first and best.
-  Children need to be given opportunities to bring their tithe – offering. It might not be much but amount isn't the issue. Provide opportunities for them to financially give back to their local church, to missions, and to people in need. Kids get excited about making a difference and sharing what they have – give them lots of opportunities to be good stewards of what they have.



Stewardship of our Talent – what we can do




“Now the body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body...in fact God has arranged the parts in the body every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 18)

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”

(Romans 12:1)

“For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.” (Matthew 25:29)

Not only is everything we have God’s, everything we can do is God’s. Your kids have tons of ability – musical, electronic, athletic, technical, audio visual, mechanical, etc. I am continually amazed at how much my kids know and can do.




-  It is our responsibility to give our students opportunities to use their skills, gifts and talents for the Lord. He created them and gave them their skills, gifts and talents – they need to know that.
-  They also need to know He created them that way for a purpose, to help the body. Each of us working together, doing whatever it is He gifted us to do to fulfill His work... The gifts aren’t for our own benefit or to get recognition and praise, but to glorify Him.
-  The students also need to understand that their skills, gifts and talents need exercised. Hide it in a ground and it will be lost – use it and the Bible says He’ll add more! The best way to exercise is to do it – so let your students sing, play, lead, teach, read, pray, type, fix, enter, program, set-up, tear-down, serve, etc... use their skills, gifts, and talents today in the children’s ministry program and in the church.



Stewardship of our time -

“Go ye into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” (Mark 16:15)

Time is something none of us have excess of - even our kids. School, homework, sports practice, music lessons, organized events, church services, TV, video games, going to the mall, talking to friends on line, eat up tons of their time. It is said this generation of kids is the most time organized – giving them very little time to just be. When placed with the option of going to a soccer game or going to church, what will they choose? When asked to help clean up from a church party or go home and watch a television show, what will they choose? How they choose today – will impact the decisions they make as adults.

-  Our children need to understand the value of their time and the gift it is. God has provided us time to do His work.
-  Kids need to be expected to use their time wisely, make good choices with their time, and make sure God has first place not only with what they own and what they can do but with their minutes, hours and days.
-  What are we suppose to do with our time?
 - Tell others about God’s love and salvation – evangelism
 - Grow deeper in our own commitment and relationship – discipleship
 - Give generously to help our church and others – stewardship and missions
 - Budget it well and develop habits of right choices

“Do not store up for yourselves treasurers on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasurers in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21)





- Y N Do you live a life of stewardship?
- Y N Do you understand the Biblical concept of tithing and practice it?
- Y N Does God have your skills, abilities and talents?
- Y N Is your time spent wisely for eternity purposes?
- Y N Do you teach stewardship of the student's tithe, talent, and time?
- Y N Do you demonstrate a life of stewardship of your tithe, talent, and time?
- Y N Do you give your students opportunity to tithe or donate towards the church, missions or another ministry?
- Y N Do you know what skills, gifts and talents each of your students possess?
- Y N Do you give them opportunity to use those skills, gifts, and talents for the building of the kingdom?
- Y N Do you challenge your students to make right choices with their time?
- Y N Do you make the statement "we missed you," mean it and find out why they were gone?
- Y N Do your students understand that God has given us things, abilities and opportunities so we can share His message?