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The Most Strategic Ministry of the Church



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WITH BISHOP TREVOR REID, BISHOP MICHAEL ROSEBORO,
AND PASTOR JANICE ROSEBORO



As international director, I am often heard saying that "Children's ministry is the most energetic and most strategic ministry of the church." It's not something I simply say, but something I wholeheartedly believe. When given the opportunity, it's something I share—in trainings, at conventions, and in personal conversations with leaders.

While "energetic" may be easy to understand as a reader who has observed children for any given length of time, you might question how children's ministry is the "most strategic ministry" of the church. It's a fair question, so I invite you to consider the following statistics from the Barna Organization¹:

- More than half of people who will ever accept Jesus as their Savior do so before the age of 12.
- Less than 1/4 of current believers came to Christ after the age 21.
- By the time a child turns nine years old, their basic moral foundation and worldview has been formed.
- By age 13, a person has "irrevocably" formed the majority of their beliefs about the nature of God, the existence of Satan, the reliability of the Bible, what they believe about the after-life, the deity, the salvation experience, and the importance of the Holy Spirit.

If these statistics are true, which I believe they are, the church must recognize that what a child believes by the time they turn 13 years of age is most likely what they will believe for the rest of their life. Between the ages of 4 and 14, we have a window of opportunity to reach souls at the time they are most receptive to the gospel. In addition to the spiritual importance of reaching children when they are young, many statistics also affirm the value of children's ministry in serving families and communities²:

- When asked, "How important is the children's ministry in whether you remain involved in your current church," 62 percent of parents said it's "very important" with an additional 25 percent saying it's "moderately important."
- Sixty-six percent of parents said the children's ministry plays an important factor in whether they stay at a church, and another 24 percent said it plays a moderately important role.
- When parents ranked the three greatest benefits their current children's ministry offers, by far the number one benefit was this: "It helps my kids develop a personal, growing faith."

The words of researcher George Barna in his book *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions* summarize the strategic importance of children's ministry when he says, "If you want to have a lasting influence upon the world, you must invest in people's lives; and if you want to maximize that investment, then you must invest in those people while they are young."³

¹ Evangelism is most effective among kids. (n.d.). Barna Group. <https://www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/>.

² Children's ministry's impact on your church growth. (2020, September 18). Children's Ministry. <https://childrensministry.com/childrens-ministrys-impact/>

³ George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, Baker Books, 2013, p. 30.

As the *White Wing Messenger* draws attention to local church ministry, International Children's Ministries invited several leading pastors to share their thoughts concerning the value, contribution, and strategic importance of this ministry. This month, we will share the feedback from three of these pastors—Bishop Trevor Reid of the Bridge of Hope (BOH), a Church of God of Prophecy congregation in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Bishop Michael and Pastor Janice Roseboro of Greater Vision Worship Center in Smithfield, North Carolina.

How does children's ministry contribute to the overall life and/or ministry of your church?

Bishop Trevor Reid: The Bridge of Hope Church mission is to Make, Mature, and Multiply disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Everything we do must contribute toward disciple-making. Children's ministry is no different. We believe that God called his people to prioritize making disciples of children. Deuteronomy 6 tells us that God intended his Word to dwell in the hearts of children and for his Lordship to be expressed through their lives (Deuteronomy 6:1, 2). He even gave specific methods for how parents are to pass on the faith (disciple) to children (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). Jesus instructed the church that his kingdom is called to receive children (Luke 18:16). So the church and the home partner together to make kingdom disciples of our children.

Bishop Michael and Pastor Janice Roseboro: A partnership between parents, church staff, and membership ensures the effectiveness of our children's ministry. We view this shared or mutually responsible partnership as designed for inculcation and integration. Inculcation is the process of instilling in our children the knowledge of God along with that child's unique giftedness. This process occurs through frequent and repetitious exposure to the Word of God. As Solomon connotes, this process must begin at birth. Parents must not fear appearing to be overbearing when teaching their children biblically sound practices.

Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train up a child in his way and when he is old he will not depart from it." Here, Solomon instructs us to train up a child or establish a strong foundational knowledge to produce spiritual growth. For years, arborists have recommended that many newly planted trees be stabilized by staking them to ensure straight or upright growth. Similarly, it is advisable to consider our children as "trees of righteousness," the "planting of the Lord" (Isaiah 61:3). The consummate goal is the growth of a tree that will "bring forth fruit in his season" and whose "leaf shall not wither" (Psalm 1:3). As with a tree, the potential for the child to fall exists. But in the event a fall does occur, the root structure remains and there's a strong probability that the child will recover.

God-fearing parents are graced with the ability to discern their child's gifts and potential. Moses' parents discerned early that he was a "proper" child and hid him for three months (Hebrews 11:23). He was "exceeding fair" and therefore "nourished up" (groomed) in his father's house, in preparation for God's use (Acts 7:20). Moses' physical appearance, a superficial quality, was figurative of an internal character that was attractive and useful to God. Each child's gifts and qualities are uniquely designed to fulfill God's purpose within the body of Christ.

From your perspective, what makes a children's ministry effective and valuable to your congregation?

Bishop Michael and Pastor Janice Roseboro: Integration makes children's ministry valuable to the congregation by the combined efforts of parents and the children's ministry. This integration allows not only for conjoining of gifts but also continuity of the gospel. With proper nurturing, our children will use their gifts in tandem with others and inspire their peers. The probability exists that this present generation will

witness the second coming of the Lord. Therefore, it is crucial that our sons and daughters are prepared to receive the last days outpouring of God's Spirit and are equipped to prophecy (Acts 2:17).

Bishop Trevor Reid: As children's ministry partners with parents in discipling their children, families become more skilled and emboldened by the Spirit to disciple adults. Of course, some children come to faith apart from their home. At Bridge of

Hope, not only do we make disciples of children, but we empower and call our children to join us as his church and help us make disciples of children and parents. We have found that children often make the best missionaries to reach their own family and friends. Parents have told us how their children have both helped encourage and deepen their faith!

What are ways that you and/or your church have helped advance children's ministry in your congregation?

Bishop Trevor Reid: During this pandemic, our children's ministry has provided parents and caretakers the opportunity of becoming more involved (and confident) in their role as the main spiritual guide for their family. The limitations of these times have been a blessing in disguise, providing a sense of spiritual urgency in the families and for us as a ministry, an opportunity to partner with new families. During our church's 21 days of fasting, our parents and children have led nightly devotions for our church on Facebook and YouTube channels. On Sunday morning, our children led virtual services to help disciple other children through our website, Facebook, and YouTube channels. During the summer, we helped families do VBS at home through nightly faith activities. Also, our children started a midweek Zoom session to encourage one another in faith and learn a lesson about continuing to follow Jesus. At BOH, children's ministry is at the core of obeying Jesus' mission to make disciples of all people!

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