

Kids' Discipleship Starting Points

Prepared for Benediction Church, November 2017

In October 2017, it was agreed that at Benediction Church, the model of children's ministry we'll pursue is an integrated one: it's our desire and expectation that our kids - particularly school-aged ones - will be engaged and participate in the gathered and scattered life of this church because it's *theirs*. While other churches have their own reasons for either segregating kids or including them in the same space as the adults (whether they engage or not), our aim, wherever possible, is true integration. In that discussion, we asked three groups of people what they need for us to be a truly integrated church. Those groups: the church family, parents, and children.

Comments from the church:

- We need to be flexible with kids and each other when things go differently than we expected.
- We love the vision that *discipleship* - not *containment* or crowd *management* - is the goal.
- We need to remember that kids remember how they're treated in church; those interactions will eventually incline them toward (or away from) holding onto the Christian faith.
- We need cooperation from all involved: kids and adults have a part to play when we are together.
- We're committed to keeping kids safe from abuse in our ministry environments and homes;
- We seek to be honest, open, accountable, and teachable.
- We expect the whole church to take a role in caring for and discipling the kids.
- We need ongoing discussion about what's fair to expect from our kids and each other.

Comments from the kids:

- We need to be respectful to adults, and especially our leaders because they care for us
- We need to be quiet and listen when it's time to be quiet and listen.
- We want to be part of what's going on - we don't want to be in another space if we don't have to.
- We need to bring our Bibles and come ready to use them.
- When we mess up or hurt someone, we need to be ready to say we're sorry.
- When someone messes up or hurts us, we need to be ready to forgive.
- We want adults to remember that we don't always understand what you're doing or saying, or what it means.

Comments from parents:

- We need to show patience and trust for leaders whose approaches are different than ours.
- We need to show extra grace - everything won't be neat and tidy.
- We need to prepare our children that what's being taught is valuable and important.
- We need to be responsible for our kids; we can't delegate their discipleship to others.
- We need to lay down our pride and be prepared to learn from others.
- We need to trust that Benediction Church wants the very best for our kids.
- We need to give other adults permission to speak into the lives of our children.
- We need to be open to creative solutions to unexpected challenges (e.g., a screaming infant).

Kids' Ministry at Benediction Church

Jesus said: "Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of Heaven." (Mt. 19:14)

At Benediction Church, we assume that a kids' ministry should have as its main focus a model of discipleship that will not just *teach* but *model* Christian life and worship. To that end, and because the Lord welcomes children, we take an integrated approach wherever possible. It's our desire and expectation that our kids - particularly school-aged ones - will not only be present, but *participants* in the gathered and scattered life of this church.

This vision isn't just the responsibility of a few volunteers; it's up to all of us.

Therefore, we ask each group to commit to do its part:

What is the Church's part?

- We'll regard kids as small but full humans; they're as much a part of the church family as anyone else.
- We'll take opportunities to serve kids - whether ours or not - and see them grow as more mature followers of Jesus.
- We'll expect kids to be meaningfully involved in this church, and prepare for the ramifications.
- We'll model the kind of lifestyle and ministry participation we want kids to imitate when they're older.
- We'll welcome all kinds of families who genuinely desire Christian community and growth in Jesus.
- We'll provide a safe, secure environment through strict prevention, volunteer screening and training standards as laid out in our *Plan to Protect* program guidelines.

What is the Kids' part:

- We'll learn the stories of Scripture because it's all one story - our story!
- We'll respect our teachers and leaders and help them enjoy their roles.
- We'll do our best, and when we can't, we'll do what we can.
- We'll put others first in how we use our words and actions, treating them how we want to be treated.
- We'll solve problems with words, not fists (no hitting), feet (no kicking), or fingers (no taking what isn't ours).

What is the Parents' part?

- We'll prepare our kids with what they need to thrive in this church (e.g., nutrition, rest, expectations, consistency, etc.).
- We'll communicate with KD leaders about any exceptional needs that require accommodating for my child(ren).
- We'll accept responsibility for our child(ren)'s discipleship until they're able to be responsible for it themselves.
- We'll do our best to keep our kids' leaders and teachers feeling supported, appreciated, and encouraged.