

WHITE WING

MAY 2024

MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

THE FEARLESS FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

A Special Edition Featuring **cgpkids**

Children's Ministry
for Today's Church

The Prophetic Call to
Disciple Our Children

The Power of Discipling
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WHITE WING MESSENGER

WE BELIEVE in the Holy Trinity—one God, eternally existing in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God, the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. All things were made through Him and for Him. He is true God and true man. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered, died, was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and He will return to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father. He is Teacher, Comforter, Helper, and Giver of spiritual gifts. Through Him the saving and sanctifying works of Jesus Christ are applied to the life of believers. He is the empowering presence of God in the life of the Christian and the church. The Father has sent His Son to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and bearing the fruit of the Spirit are New Testament signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross and that He died in our place. The believer's sins are forgiven by the shedding of His blood. We believe that healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit is available to the believer through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in one baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the grace of God brings forgiveness and reconciliation to those who repent, as well as transformation in holiness, enabling them to live a Christ-like life. Sanctification is both a definite work of grace and a lifelong process of change in the believer brought by the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one holy, universal church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages. We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the church.

We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian's rule of faith and practice.

We believe that God will ultimately reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Therefore, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

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About the Church of God of Prophecy

The Church of God of Prophecy is a vibrant, worldwide body of believers, united in worship, working hand-in-hand to share God's love and a message of hope to the brokenhearted. The organization has more than a million members and more than 10,000 ministers, worshiping in more than 10,000 churches or missions in 135 nations of the world.

Church of God of Prophecy Core Values

- Prayer
- The Harvest
- Leadership Development
- Biblical Stewardship
- Service

Vision Statement

Reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit

Mission Statement

The Church of God of Prophecy is a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church-planting movement with passion for Christian union.

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Spanish-Speaking Caribbean
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James Kolawole: Africa
Tim McCaleb: Asia/Australia/Oceania
Gabriel E. Vidal: South America

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FACING *FORWARD*

Tim Coalter
Presiding Bishop



The May issue of the *White Wing Messenger* brings both the turning of a page and the anticipation of the rest of the story. It is fitting that this final printed issue looks to what lies ahead as it centers around children as the fearless future of the church.

More than 100 years ago, a visionary saw the future. He envisioned a church built on Jesus, the Bible, and God's people—full of the Holy Spirit—doing the work of the kingdom. A. J. Tomlinson saw the young church moving triumphantly toward a day when multitudes around the world would come to Jesus. One way he communicated the vision was to write it. In books, journals, newspapers, and magazines, he showed what he believed to be the scriptural instruction to write the vision and make it plain, so they may run with it who read it (Habakkuk 2:2).

In these latter days, God has used the diligent work of his people to expand the COGOP to 135 nations. Some of these nations come with governmental, postal, and economic restrictions that have prohibited us from getting our beloved *White Wing Messenger* to many in our global Church family. As the Scripture says, “Brethren, these things ought not to be!” Our brother in Cuba, our sister in Venezuela, that pastor or leader in Cote d’Ivoire, or Indonesia, or the mountains of Guatemala needs connection with the rest of the Church.

The *White Wing Messenger* is now offered at no cost to everyone, everywhere. How can we accomplish this? Because there are more than 10 billion digital devices all around the globe. We have stepped into the future by producing a high-quality, informative, interactive digital publication. You can access the sign-up page here: <https://cmdept.wufoo.com/forms/z1knik3m1mbzirn/>

We all know that change can be a bit unsettling. In 1954, M. A. Tomlinson announced a new look for the *White Wing Messenger*, saying, “Our subscribers may not recognize the first issue of the new year. . . . Those who have been subscribers for years may miss the

paper in the old style and will probably feel a little lost without it for a while, but when we get accustomed to the new style, I believe we will like it.” He described this change of style as “the White Wing in its new dress” (WWM, September 2023, page 9).

Once again, the *White Wing Messenger* is putting on a new dress. The chapters that told the story of the COGOP and its triumphs in a printed medium have come to completion with this May issue. The digital readership is already 10 times the number of subscribers we had for the print magazine. For this we say, Praise the Lord! With the Holy Spirit as our guide, we now turn the page where we will continue to write new visions, tell new stories, and connect new readers with the digital *White Wing Messenger*.

You might be wondering, what does all this have to do with the emphasis of this issue on child discipleship and “The Fearless Future of the Church.” The answer is, “Everything!” Child discipleship is the bridge to the fearless future of the church, so it is imperative that we give attention to the young harvest.

When I was a kid, Etch A Sketch was “the thing.” It was first sold in the United States in 1960, the year I was born. Etch-a-sketch was a plastic rectangle with a translucent screen in the middle and two knobs below the screen—one for horizontal, one for vertical—which controlled the direction of an uninterrupted line that appeared on the screen, allowing the user to “draw.” The drawing could then be erased by shaking the device.

The Etch A Sketch was big in my day, but we no longer live in an etch-a-sketch world. Kids now speak a different language. It is all about technology. One of the great takeaways of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is that every man heard them speak in his own language.

The digital *White Wing Messenger* will allow us to speak in a language this generation will understand. If it can be used to help in the discipleship of our children and grandchildren, I am all in! How about you?

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THE FEARLESS FUTURE OF THE CHURCH



The future is . . . ? When you consider the future, what are your thoughts and feelings? Hollywood has long portrayed visions of what lies ahead. As a young boy growing up in the 1980s, I was enthralled with ideas depicted in movie franchises like *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*—tablet computers, smart homes, smart watches, 3-D printing, robots, military drones, virtual reality headsets, self-driving cars, space tourism . . . the list could go on and on. As I now look back nearly 40 years later, it is intriguing to consider how these glimpses into the future foretold advancements and innovations that would come to pass in my lifetime.

For most of us, thoughts about the future bring both excitement and apprehension. The future holds boundless dreams, opportunities, and possibilities. It also has its share of uncertainty and potential difficulties. We navigate our future with a mix of anticipation and perhaps fear, aware that the future may bring victory or failure, progress or pain, breakthrough or calamity.

While thinking about the future can trigger anxiety, it can also bring greater meaning and purpose to our lives. Scientists call “prospection” the ability to consider the future. It is found in both the human and the animal world. For example, when a dog gets excited because its owner has retrieved his leash, the dog is anticipating that a walk is coming. But prospection has unique benefits for us humans. Scientists say we can think about our own futures and, based on our experience, consider multiple outcomes for our future. Just as gold prospecting made people wealthy in the past, research suggests that prospecting about the future can enrich and prosper your life.

As we consider the future of the church, I want to invite you to go prospecting with me.

If you are concerned about our future, you are not alone. In a 2023 study by Lifeway Research, almost seven in ten pastors (69%) stated they believe there is a growing sense of fear within their churches about the future of the nation and world.¹ Lifeway also found that 63% of surveyed pastors said their churches also have “a similar increasing dread specifically about the future of Christianity.”

These statistics are not surprising for those of us who have acknowledged that the church is contending with rising hostility toward the gospel, the spread of secular culture, the influence of the media on society, challenges to orthodox views of Scripture, and the collapse of the family, among many other challenges. Scripture warned us of these times of suffering, tribulation, and trial (John 16:33; Romans 12:12; James 1:2–8; Romans 8:18).

Will these forces continue to rise and overtake us? We know the answer is “no.” While local churches might fall away or die, Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18 that the gates of hell would never overcome his church. Despite persecution, being driven underground, or the falling away of masses, the church will always prevail.

While for some our future may look perilous and wearisome at times, I have come to find great hope in the future of the church. I believe actions can be taken today to create a fearless tomorrow for the next generation of believers, and these actions can be best taken through the discipleship of our children.

As we apply the earlier idea of “prospection” to the future of the church through the lens of child discipleship, I believe we impact the church’s future in four ways:

1. We will make wise, strategic decisions.
2. We will determine and set achievable goals.
3. We will improve our perspective of the future.
4. It will impact this generation now.

We will make wise, strategic decisions.

Thinking about the future helps us decide what course of action must be taken here and now. I believe children’s ministry is the most strategic ministry of the church. Consider the following statistics from the Barna Organization:²

- More than half of people who will ever accept Jesus as their Savior, do so before the age of 12.
- Less than one-fourth of current believers came to Christ after the age 21.
- By the time a child turns 9 years old, their basic moral foundation and worldview have 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 afterlife, the Deity, the salvation experience, and the importance of the Holy Spirit.

If these statistics are true, 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 communities:³

- When asked how important is the children's ministry in whether a family remained involved in their current church, 62% of parents said it is "very important" with an additional 25% saying it is "moderately important."
- 66% of parents said the children's ministry plays an important factor in whether they stay at a church, and another 24% said it plays a moderately important role.
- When parents ranked the three greatest benefits their current children's ministry offers, the number one benefit by far was that it helps their 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."⁴

We will determine and set achievable goals.

Research tells us that thinking about the future motivates us to set and attain goals, but only if we believe the effort is worth it.

When I look into the eyes of the children I serve in my local ministry on Sunday mornings, I cannot help but be motivated to pray for their future as Christ followers. What I provide to them today in the form of godly care and instruction must be of value. I must give them the foundation, knowledge, and tools to grow as fully devoted followers of Jesus—not just entertain them or make them good citizens.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) reminds us, "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." As we think about our ministry goals, we must remember that they are about the future, "what we hope for." Our goals are what propel us toward something new, the "assurance about what we do not see."

Measurable goals and clearly defined objectives aid in the allocation and accountability of our resources in children's ministry. They have power to motivate people and move them toward action. Goals are considered those larger, overarching concepts for your ministry, whereas objectives provide the means to measure your progress toward the achievement of those goals and keep you accountable. Objectives are usually short-term and easy to measure.

What are the goals for your ministry? Having clearly defined

goals and objectives for your ministry serve as a road map for the year. Goals communicate to everyone connected with your ministry what the priorities are. As goals are achieved, celebrate them with your team.

We will improve our perspective of the future while impacting a generation NOW.

Focusing on the future and intentionally discipling your children will impact your congregation now! As international director, I will occasionally encounter a pastor who reports, "We have no children in our church." When I visit these congregations, most often I find a sad environment with no life. Conversely, when I visit a church that is reaching the next generation, no matter how few or many, I find life. As we actively disciple the coming generation, we cannot help but look to the future with hope while enjoying the benefits of life children bring to our community.

In this issue of the *White Wing Messenger*, we will consider the future of the church and give attention to the call to ensure that we are discipling the children God has entrusted to us. It is the hope of International Children's Ministries that you will prayerfully read through these pages and ask God how he would have you respond to his call to disciple kids—the ones in your home, your neighborhood, or your community.

Additionally, we want to inspire you concerning the future of the church. Our future is bright as we cling to his great promise, "In the last days," God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

¹ Aaron Earls, "Fear Prevalent in Pews, According to Protestant Pastors." Lifeway Research, August 8, 2023, research.lifeway.com/2023/08/08/fear-prevalent-in-pews-according-to-protestant-pastors/.

² "Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids," Barna Group, n.d., <https://www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/>.

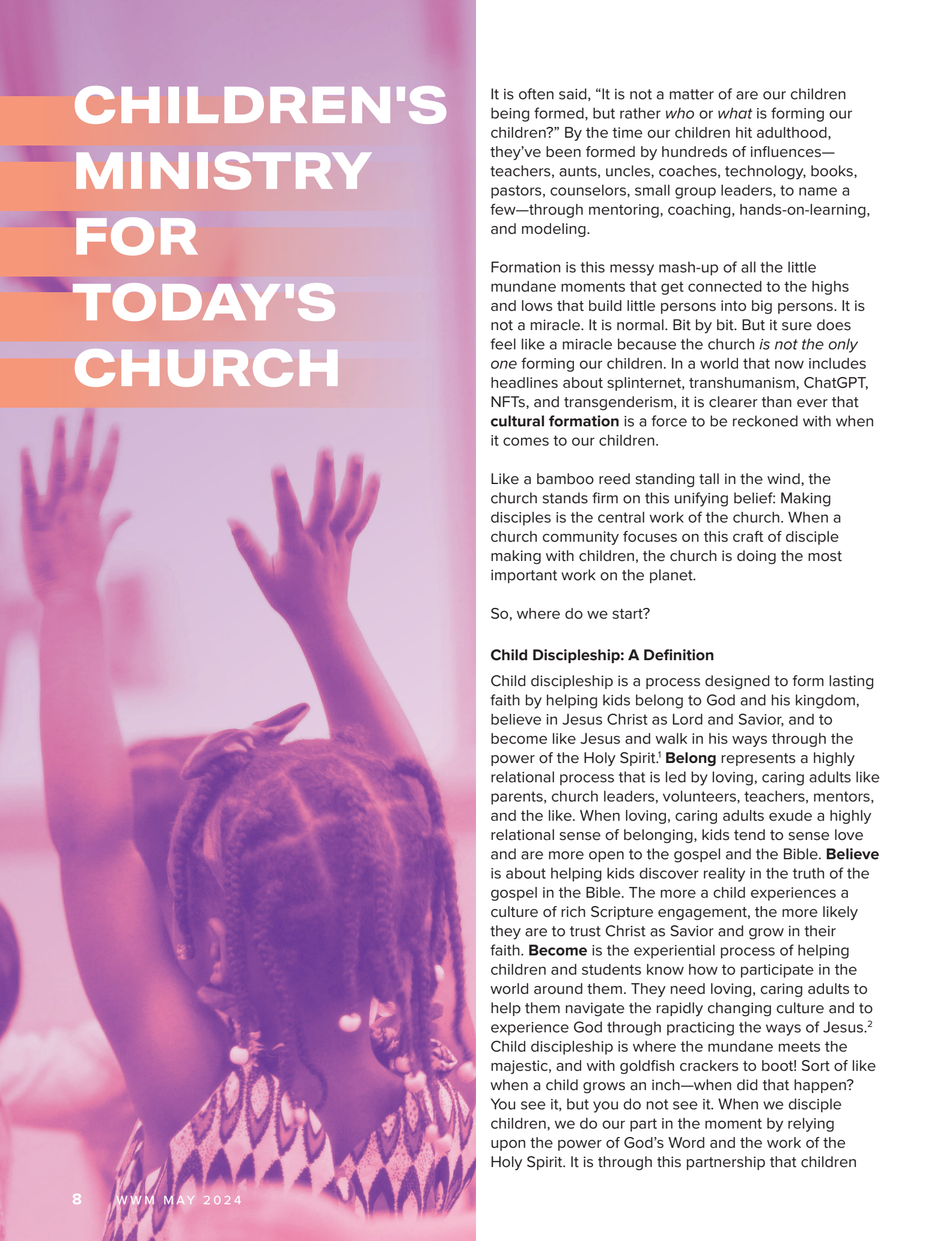
³ "Children's Ministry's Impact on Your Church Growth," Childrensministry.com, accessed September 18, 2020, <https://childrensministry.com/childrens-ministrys-impact/>.

⁴ George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 30.



Bishop Shaun McKinley, PhD
International Children's Ministries Director

Dr. Shaun McKinley serves as international director of Children's Ministries and administrative liaison to the Presiding Bishop at the Church of God of Prophecy International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee. He and his wife, Stephanie, serve as preschool teachers at the Peerless Road Church, also in Cleveland.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY FOR TODAY'S CHURCH

It is often said, “It is not a matter of are our children being formed, but rather *who* or *what* is forming our children?” By the time our children hit adulthood, they’ve been formed by hundreds of influences—teachers, aunts, uncles, coaches, technology, books, pastors, counselors, small group leaders, to name a few—through mentoring, coaching, hands-on-learning, and modeling.

Formation is this messy mash-up of all the little mundane moments that get connected to the highs and lows that build little persons into big persons. It is not a miracle. It is normal. Bit by bit. But it sure does feel like a miracle because the church *is not the only one* forming our children. In a world that now includes headlines about splinternet, transhumanism, ChatGPT, NFTs, and transgenderism, it is clearer than ever that **cultural formation** is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to our children.

Like a bamboo reed standing tall in the wind, the church stands firm on this unifying belief: Making disciples is the central work of the church. When a church community focuses on this craft of disciple making with children, the church is doing the most important work on the planet.

So, where do we start?

Child Discipleship: A Definition

Child discipleship is a process designed to form lasting faith by helping kids belong to God and his kingdom, believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to become like Jesus and walk in his ways through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹ **Belong** represents a highly relational process that is led by loving, caring adults like parents, church leaders, volunteers, teachers, mentors, and the like. When loving, caring adults exude a highly relational sense of belonging, kids tend to sense love and are more open to the gospel and the Bible. **Believe** is about helping kids discover reality in the truth of the gospel in the Bible. The more a child experiences a culture of rich Scripture engagement, the more likely they are to trust Christ as Savior and grow in their faith. **Become** is the experiential process of helping children and students know how to participate in the world around them. They need loving, caring adults to help them navigate the rapidly changing culture and to experience God through practicing the ways of Jesus.² Child discipleship is where the mundane meets the majestic, and with goldfish crackers to boot! Sort of like when a child grows an inch—when did that happen? You see it, but you do not see it. When we disciple children, we do our part in the moment by relying upon the power of God’s Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. It is through this partnership that children



“When we disciple children, we do our part in the moment by relying upon the power of God's Word and the work of the Holy Spirit.

can respond to the gospel, trust in Jesus Christ, and mature in their faith. As children follow Jesus over time, the Holy Spirit transforms them through the ongoing, lifetime process of discipleship to become more like him. It is in this partnership between us (disciple makers) and God that *the faith of our children is formed*.

A Foundation of Scripture

The lasting faith of our children is what we long for. It is what makes our heart pump a little faster. If we want lasting faith in our children, we have got to dig that foundation even deeper. When we do, we fill it not only with a Scripture-rich environment where kids' lives are saturated with the Bible, but we also give kids the gospel worldview . . . a worldview that is far more satisfying than the empty promises of hyper individualism. What is a biblical worldview? It is a framework of the gospel:

- Creation – I was made, I know who made me, and I have value and purpose;
- Fall – I know where sin comes from, I know what is wrong with me, and I know what is wrong with the world;
- Redemption – I know who paid for my sin, who can save me from my sin, and ultimately save me from the penalty of death; and
- Restoration – I know who can lead me to abundant life. I know who can change and transform me, and I know one day all will be renewed to a perfect state in Heaven.

Today's children need to be engaged in environments that are saturated with the Bible—God's Word. If we want to increase our effectiveness at discipling children with faith that lasts, we must teach our children the Bible in a way that is Christ-centric and makes the

gospel story arch crystal clear, as we saturate our kids' lives in Bible-rich environments.

A Pathway to Parents

We discovered some interesting insights from parents in our 2022 Barna Group study. A common narrative “about parents” among children's ministry leaders goes something like this: “I try to get parents engaged in discipling their own kids, but all too often, so many parents are disengaged in the process.” That leads us to ask the question, “Are children's ministries covering the tough topics that matter to parents?”³ We found that there were three areas where children's ministry leaders seem to be ahead of the game in terms of addressing cultural topics. These topics are as follows:

- Bullying
- Loneliness
- Social Media

There are also additional areas where parents believe that children's ministry should address cultural topics. These topics include the following:

- Depression
- Racial Inequality
- Suicide
- Self-Harm
- School Shootings
- Sexual Identity

Parents are open to more help from the church. There is a tremendous opportunity to discover exactly what the key issues are in your church community and build a bridge to the hearts of parents and children.

Understanding This Cultural Age

We are no longer living in a quasi-majority-Christian-culture. Today's kids need to be *protected* but also **prepared** by God's agents of formation—the church

and the home. This preparation begins in childhood, in age-appropriate ways. If we wait until they are in their teen years to begin preparing them to navigate “today’s Babylon,” **we have waited far too long.** We must embody a missionary mindset as we raise and disciple kids in today’s world. As disciples of Jesus, they are going to look, act, and talk *differently*. Like the men of Issachar who understood the times and knew what to do, let us prepare our children to bend and flex, but not break, under the weight of culture.⁴

How do we better understand the times to know what to do?

1. Insight – We need to gain additional insight as to how the dominant cultures are forming our children, why it is important, and what we can do about it. Insight helps us understand the why, and it takes away the intimidating mystique of something that otherwise might seem daunting. Here is a list of resources that have been incredibly helpful in gaining insight in the area of cultural formation:

- Listen to *This Cultural Moment* podcast (start with Season 1, Episode 1)
- Attend the Child Discipleship Forum
- Read *Reappearing Church: The Hope for Renewal in the Rise of Our Post-Christian*

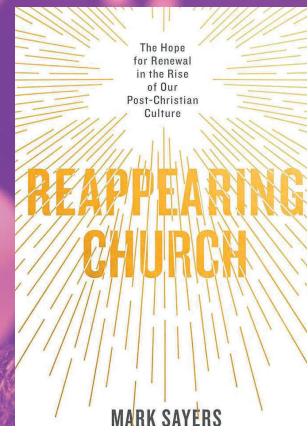
Resources: Insight



Listen *This Cultural Moment* podcast

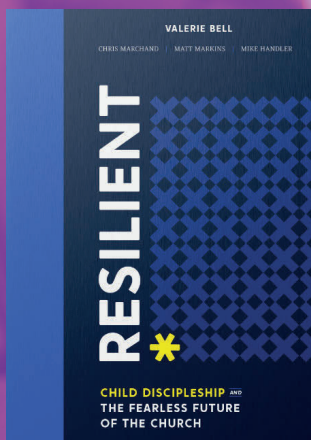


Attend The Child Discipleship Forum

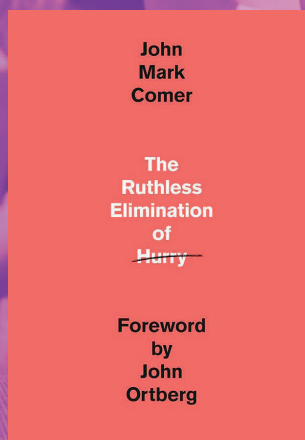


Read *Reappearing Church: The Hope for Renewal in the Rise of Our Post-Christian Culture* by Mark Sayers

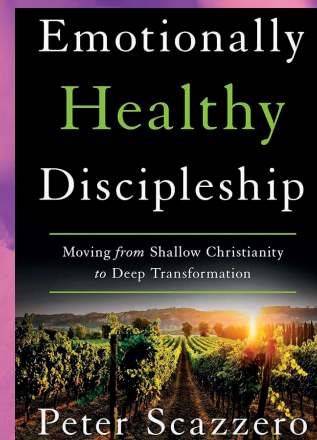
Resources: Equipping



Read *Resilient: Child Discipleship and the Fearless Future of the Church* by Valerie Bell, Mike Handler, and Matt Markins



Read *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer



Read *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: Moving from Shallow Christianity to Deep Transformation* by Pete Scazzero

Culture or A Non-Anxious Presence: How a Changing and Complex World Will Create a Remnant of Renewed Christian Leaders by Mark Sayers

2. Equipping – Insight is the starting point, but you need to know *what to do* with these key insights to bring about change. Here are a few key resources you may find helpful:

- Read *Resilient: Child Discipleship and the Fearless Future of the Church* by Valerie Bell, Mike Handler, and Matt Markins
- Read *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer
- Read *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: Moving from Shallow Christianity to Deep Transformation* by Pete Scazzero

3. Practice – practice is taking insight + equipping → and putting it into action. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Start with a discussion with your team on “how do we biblically help children and families who are being formed by the issues of our day?” Do this with your children’s ministry team, with a group of parents, or with your small group. Discussion is always a great place to begin. Dialogue and conversation give everyone a chance to express what is in their heart and mind as well as to ask questions and to wrestle with complex issues as a group.
- Pray together with your team and with groups of parents. Just as discussion opens the

relational dialogue, channel these questions and anxieties toward the one who can handle them—God. Wrestle with God over these issues. Talk to him. Plead with him to give you the wisdom you need that comes from him. Contend for the children within and beyond your ministry and home. This is your most important work.

Kids need a running start. They need to be prepared. We cannot wait until high school; they will be far more likely to get pummeled by the never-ending waves of secularism. When this happens, many young people fall beneath the waves of culture and never resurface to the faith.

As I breathe in the weight of the moment, I also exhale with the words of Jesus in John 16:33 where he says, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Jesus is going to build his church . . . and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

¹ Matt Markins, *The Faith of Our Children: Eight Timely Research Insights for Discipling the Next Generation* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 2023), 14.

² Valerie Bell, Matt Markins, and Mike Handler, *Resilient: Child Discipleship and the Fearless Future of the Church* (St. Charles, IL: Awana, 2020), 170–171.

³ Research Project Seven, 42.

⁴ First Chronicles 12:32, “Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command” (ESV).



Matt Markins
President/CEO of Awana

Matt serves as the President and CEO of Awana, a global leader in child discipleship. As a leading researcher in child discipleship and children’s ministry, Matt has commissioned nine research projects since 2013, including a Barna Group study called *Children’s Ministry in a New Reality*. He is co-author of three books, most notably *RESILIENT: Child Discipleship and the Fearless Future of the Church*. He is also the co-founder of the Child Discipleship Forum and D6 Conference. Matt appreciates art and carpentry, enjoys travel and long breakfasts with his wife, Katie. Matt and Katie have been involved in children’s ministry for more than 25 years and spend their time in Nashville with their two sons.



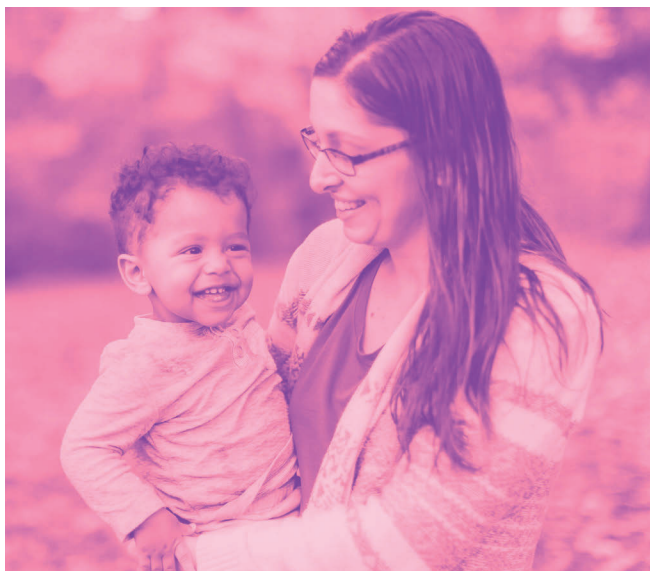
Melanie Hester
Director of Discipleship Engagement at Awana

Melanie Hester serves as the director of discipleship engagement at Awana. A passionate disciple maker of children, her own faith is deeply impacted by the 4- and 5- year-olds she teaches each week at her local church. She has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and most recently became an executive leadership coach to help children’s ministry leaders implement effective discipleship strategies into their churches. She is a wife and mom, a lover of craft coffee, and an avid shopper at Trader Joe’s.



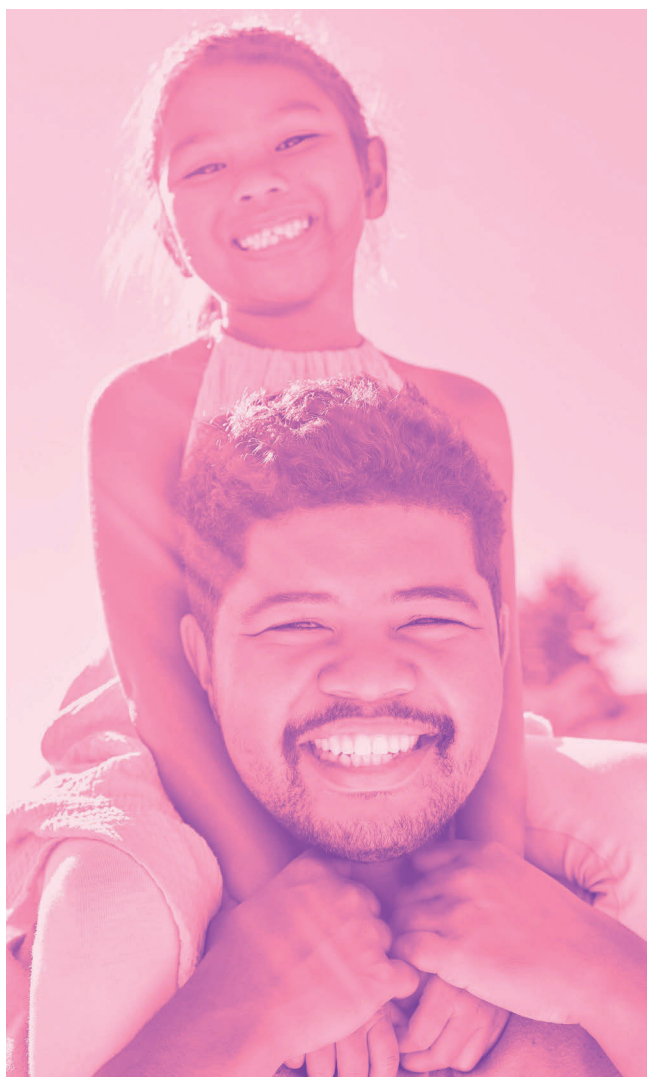
Awana is a 501(c)(3) global nonprofit that equips leaders to disciple over 6.4 million children weekly in 135 countries. You can find discipleship tools for the church and home at awana.org and childdiscipleship.com.

THE PROPHETIC CALL TO DISCIPLE OUR CHILDREN



The call to disciple does not begin with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20 where Jesus sent his disciples to “go and make disciples.” The commandment to disciple has existed since the beginning of creation. Bible scholars highlight a unique connection between the Great Commission and the first commandment (Genesis 1:28), where Adam and Eve were commanded to “go and multiply.”

There is a definitive link between the church’s call to make disciples and the family’s call to bear and raise their children to be godly disciples. This call is echoed in what Peter preached at the end of Acts 2: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for *you* and your children, and *all* who are far off—for *all* whom the Lord God will call” (Acts 2:38–39 NIV, italics added). The covenant promise is given to you, your kids, and the world!



So, just how important is family discipleship? Well, according to the reasoning above, it seems the main emphasis of what the church is doing should be geared toward this! Instead, we focus on so many other things within the church: small groups, community groups, Sunday services, youth ministry, children’s ministry, worship ministry, and so on. While all of these are connected and important in and of themselves, we are missing what I believe to be the critical issue for the church today: a prophetic call for parents to disciple their children.

Families come in all shapes and sizes—single-parent, blended, large, and small. Thus, the manner in which family discipleship is accomplished varies from family to family and is as unique as the DNA of each home. Family discipleship is not one-size-fits-all, and it is not easy; even the most intentional, gospel-centered parents may find themselves at a loss as to how to begin. The church is responsible for coming

alongside families to help them craft their approach to discipling their home. “Families must be viewed as full expressions of the church but not as substitutions for the church. Congregations are accountable for helping each child find their rightful place in the body of Christ. It is (also) the responsibility of the church to guide every convert, regardless of age, into a lifestyle of conformity to the teachings of Christ.”¹

Discipleship in an Age of Antagonism²

It is important to recognize the unique challenges that our children face from an early age in this present era. The onslaught against the teachings of Jesus has now shifted to where the beliefs of our children are being attacked from ages 8 to 12, the most crucial period of their moral development.

Renew.org identifies four phases of a child’s moral development and discipleship.

Ages 0–7: Children learn so much during this phase, absorbing everything from their parents and assimilating massive amounts of information.

Ages 8–11: Moral values and critical belief systems begin to develop, meaning this is a peak period for a parent’s moral and spiritual influence. However, three cultural trends have arisen that challenge the parent’s role:

1. Many parents and families are so busy today, leaving little time for parents to disciple their children’s minds.
2. Many children at this age are immersed in technologies like smartphones that have more influence on their beliefs than parental influence.
3. Many public schools have adopted philosophies and practices, such as embracing transgenderism, which provide influence contrary to Scripture.

The unfortunate effect of these trends on this phase of childhood development is that the world has a more profound influence on children than parents. Yet this should be the time when parental influence helps the children “develop their faith and morals and put things together that make sense.”

Ages 12–15: Children start making choices to be in step with their peer group, and many are more influenced by their friends’ lifestyle choices than their families’ choices.

Ages 15–25: Parents still influence their children’s choices, but others are increasingly influencing them as they are making independent choices.³

Child discipleship has to happen as early as possible. According to the Barna Group, kids’ moral standards are basically in place by age 9, their beliefs about Christ by age 12, and they pretty much believe what they are going to believe spiritually for the rest of their lives by age 13.⁴

International Children’s Ministries offers a number of resources for the local church, states, regions, and nations to serve parents. One excellent resource is the “Influencing the Influencers” one-day training intensive. If you would like to explore bringing this training to your area, visit cogop.org/children/onsite-training.

As a church leader, discipling children is challenging. You have one significant roadblock you have to overcome—time. Make an honest evaluation of how much time your church directly influences children. Regardless of how much time you spend, it fails when compared to how much time children spend with their families during the week.

So, then, how do we help families to disciple their children through these phases?

Pray and be led by the Holy Spirit.

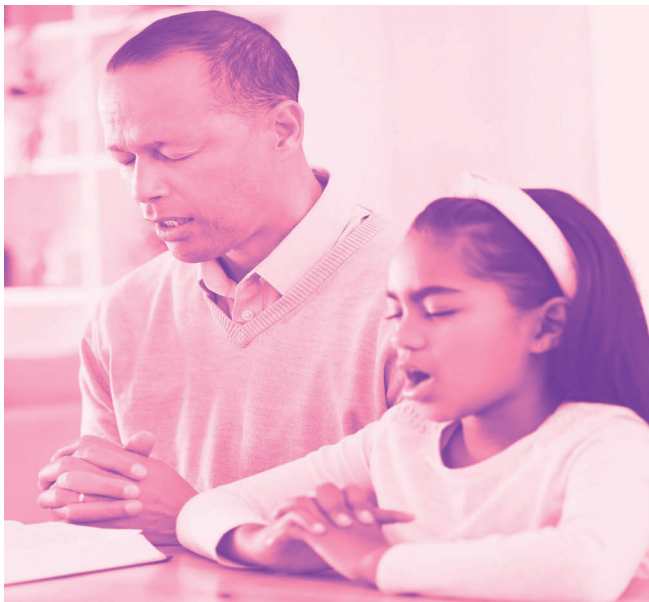
Strategies will only get us so far. As a faith family, we must be on our knees in constant prayer for family discipleship in the church and the home. We must trust God to lead us every step of the way.

Lead parents and guardians to live for Jesus.

The church can influence a child for Christ independently from their parents. However, how much more will families impact their children if the parents grow to love and live for Jesus? The most significant influence in a child’s life is their parents and who they are as Christians. Before parents can lead their children to follow Jesus, the church must lead parents to Jesus.

Equip the family as primary disciple-makers.

Parents not only have the biblical responsibility to be the primary disciple-makers of their home, but they also have the most significant opportunity to do so as



they have the most considerable influence over their children.

Help parents to talk about their faith.

Expel nervousness and fear from families. We desire to come alongside parents to equip and train them to be the primary disciple-makers in the home. Let them know they are not alone. Help parents to see that faith is more than participation in a worship service. From the time we wake up in the morning to when we go to bed at night, our devotion to Jesus influences what we believe, how we live, and how we parent.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 shows that discipling children involves more than what a church can offer during a weekday or weekend worship service. As a church, encourage parents and guardians to make the most of their everyday life. Faith conversations can happen during dinner. Prayer, Scripture reading, and worship opportunities can occur before bedtime. Faith stories can be shared on walks and commutes to and from school. Parents can engage their children by asking questions and actively listening to their responses. Because parents and other influencers spend more time with our children, they have many more opportunities to help them learn about and apply the Bible to their lives.

We all want churches where children grow into young adults who know, love, and serve God. Unfortunately, we are all aware of the crisis the church is facing related to young adults leaving the church and their faith. One of the best ways to reverse this trend is to have churches and families that model the biblical vision of discipleship.

The words from the book *Generation at Risk* are biblically accurate: “. . .the Christian home is the inner circle of life. However, God never intended Christian families to be islands of spirituality. There is a second circle of influence (the church).”⁵ The local church is to be that second circle, embracing, influencing, and equipping all families to disciple their children while valuing, including, and preparing children to do the works of service God has purposed for them to do.

Let us continue to offer tools, suggestions, and ideas to help parents think intentionally about the “how” of family discipleship and allow Christ to strengthen their homes.

¹ John Kie Vining, ed., *Growing Pentecostal Kids: A Covenant to Nurture Our Children*, 2nd ed. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2003).

² Information from this section comes from Bobby Harrington, “The Present & Future State of Family Discipleship,” *Renew.org*, <https://renew.org/the-present-future-state-of-family-discipleship/>.

³ Harrington, “The Present & Future State of Family Discipleship.”

⁴ “Research Shows that Spiritual Maturity Process Should Start at a Young Age,” *Barna.com*, November 17, 2003, <https://www.barna.com/research/research-shows-that-spiritual-maturity-process-should-start-at-a-young-age/>.

⁵ Fran Sciacca, *Generation at Risk* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1991).



Pastor Jonathan Olavarria

International Children's Ministries
Child Discipleship & Faith Formation Specialist

Pastor Jonathan Olavarria serves as Child Discipleship and Faith Formation Specialist for COGOP International Children's Ministry. Jonathan is responsible for developing resources and coordinating training events that aid local church congregations and parents/caregivers in sharing their faith and values with their children. Jonathan serves as pastor of The Hub Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, a ministry of the Church of God of Prophecy. He and his wife planted this growing congregation in 2016. In addition to his leadership of the local congregation, Jonathan has 15 years of experience in urban public education, serving as a History teacher, special education teacher, and bilingual education teacher with middle and high school students. In the past five years, he's served as a vice principal of a grade school in Newark, New Jersey, serving children from preschool through 8th grade.

Jonathan earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from Kean University; a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Montclair State University, and a Master of Arts in Religion concentrating in Urban Ministry and Christian Leadership from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is pursuing his Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Leadership, also with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.



KIDSERVE SURPASSES \$400K IN MISSIONS PROJECTS

Today, thousands of children in El Salvador travel down dusty roads, having attended their half day of classes at a government school. They are not heading home. They are headed to one of the Church of God of Prophecy Centers for Learning. These schools offer each of these children a nutritious meal, tutoring, skills development training, medical care, recreational sports, and most importantly, the gospel message from a loving, qualified Christian teacher.

Today, in 11 nations of West Africa, 22 master children's ministry trainers are offering training programs, support, and children's outreaches to the hundreds of Church of God of Prophecy volunteers and pastors serving kids in our congregations. Each weekend, they visit districts and regions, presenting training competencies provided in their language and contextualized to the community they are serving.



West Africa Trainers Training in Ivory Coast, 2022

In the Gambia and Guinea Conakry area, hundreds of children will worship God this weekend in an indoor classroom safe from torrential rains, blazing sun, and threats against their safety from nearby gangs and false religious sects. Just a few years ago, these children gathered under trees to hear from their teacher, but now they worship God, undistracted, comfortable, and safe.

In Cuba, countless pastoral families have received thousands of undergarments and new shoes for personal use, something taken for granted by many of us but considered an expensive luxury in the communist nation. Many only owned one pair of underwear and a pair of well-worn shoes until they, with shocked and tear-soaked faces, received these gifts from their church family.



Pastoral families collecting undergarments in Cuba, 2024

In Indonesia, hundreds of children's ministers are not struggling to find resources to teach their church's kids this Sunday. Why? Because they received a yearlong curriculum in their language to teach their children the basics of discipleship at no cost to them.

These stories, and many more, reflect the good works accomplished through the ministry of KidServe, a training and equipping program of International Children's Ministries. Although KidServe encompasses more than our mission-giving projects, through this ministry, we have surpassed \$400,000.00 raised for mission projects in more than 25 nations and the United States over the past 15 years.

We praise God today for those who have generously given and supported these efforts! We invite you to follow KidServe on Facebook to learn more about our initiatives and to celebrate what God is doing through this ministry.

Top Image Left: Group of children attending school in Gotera, El Salvador, 2021

Top Image Right: Children receive small toys and food for their family at COGOP Center for Learning



Institute of Children's Ministry in Benin, 2023



FOUNDATIONS For Kids

For more information about Foundations for Kids or to download or purchase a set of cards, visit cogop.org/children.

UNDERSTANDING GOD

1. **What is God?** God is the creator and ruler of everyone and everything.
2. **How many gods exist?** Only one true God exists.
3. **When did God come into existence?** God has always existed and will continue to exist because God is eternal.
4. **What is the trinity?** The trinity is the three equal persons of the one true God.
5. **Who are the three persons of the trinity?** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the persons of the trinity.
6. **Which person of the trinity existed first?** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have always existed together.

7. **Who did God create in His own image?** God created both male and female people in His own image.
8. **Does God have a body?** No, God is a spirit, so He does not have a physical human body.
9. **Is God everywhere?** Yes, because God is a spirit and does not have a body He is everywhere at once.
10. **Is God powerful?** Yes, God has total power over everything on heaven and earth.
11. **Does God know everything?** Yes, God knows what is happening and what will and might happen in the future.
12. **Does God change over time?** No, God has never changed and will never change.
13. **Is God perfect?** Yes, God is perfect. He has never done anything wrong and will never do anything wrong.
14. **Why did God create us?** God created us to have a relationship with Him, glorify Him, and love Him.

15. **How can we glorify God?** We can glorify God by loving Him, obeying His commands, and enjoying Him.
16. **Can we fully know and understand God?** No, we can learn about God and be close to Him, but our human mind will never be able to fully know and understand Him.
17. **Does God care for everyone and everything?** Yes, God is love and He cares for all of His creation.
18. **What are God's greatest commandments?** God's greatest commandments are to love Him and to love all people.
19. **How are we commanded to love God?** We are commanded to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.
20. **How are we commanded to love all people?** God commands for us to love all people the same way we desire to be loved.

CREATION

1. **Who created everyone and everything?** God is the creator of everyone and everything.
2. **How did God bring everything into existence?** God simply spoke everything into existence.
3. **What happened on the first day of creation?** On the first day of creation, God created light and formed both day and night.
4. **What happened on the second day of creation?** On the second day of creation, God created the sky by separating

the waters of heaven and earth.

5. **What happened on the third day of creation?** On the third day of creation, God created land, seas, trees, and plants.
6. **What happened on the fourth day of creation?** On the fourth day of creation, God created sun, moon, and stars in the sky.
7. **What happened on the fifth day of creation?** On the fifth day of creation, God created creatures to fill the seas and birds to fill the sky.
8. **What happened on the sixth day of creation?** On the sixth day of creation, God created both people and animals.
9. **What happened on the seventh day of creation?** On the seventh day of creation, God rested and declared that day holy.

10. **After God created people, what did he say they were to do?** God said that people were to rule over creation.
11. **Who were the first people that God created?** Adam and Eve were the first people that God created.
12. **How did God create Adam?** God created Adam from the dust and breathed life into his nostrils.
13. **How did God create Eve?** God created Eve using Adam's rib.
14. **What instructions did God give Adam and Eve?** God told Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
15. **Did Adam and Eve obey God's instructions not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?** No, Adam and Eve both disobeyed God's command; this is when sin entered the world.

THE SON

1. **Who was the mother of Jesus?** Mary was the mother of Jesus.
2. **Why was Jesus born of Mary?** Jesus was born of Mary to prove that He was God's Son and so we could better know God.
3. **Is Jesus a human or God?** Jesus is both fully human and fully God.
4. **What three roles does Jesus fulfill?** Jesus fulfills the roles of Prophet, Priest, and King.

5. **How is Jesus a prophet?** He teaches us God's will and did exactly what the other prophets spoke.
6. **How is Jesus a priest?** He prays to the Father for us and was the perfect sacrifice.
7. **How is Jesus a king?** He rules over His children.
8. **What did Jesus do while He lived on earth?** He traveled, taught, and performed miracles while on earth.
9. **What did Jesus teach?** He taught about God's character, God's kingdom, and how God's children can glorify Him.
10. **Why did Jesus perform miracles while on earth?** He performed miracles to show that He was God's Son, that He loves people, and to glorify God.
11. **What kind of life did Jesus live on earth?** He lived a life of suffering and obedience to the will of the Father.

12. **How did Jesus forgive the sins of all people?** Jesus lived a perfect life and died on the cross to pay for the punishment of sin.
13. **Did Jesus deserve to die on the cross because of something He had done?** No, Jesus was holy and without sin, so He did not deserve to die.
14. **What happened to Jesus after He died on the cross?** Jesus was buried in a tomb and rose from the dead on the third day.
15. **How can we trust and believe that Jesus is alive and rose from the dead?** The tomb was empty and many people saw Jesus after He rose from the dead.
16. **Where is Jesus now?** Jesus went up to heaven and will stay there with the Father until He returns again.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. **When Jesus left earth and ascended into heaven, what promise did he give to the disciples?** Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come.
2. **Who can receive the promise of the Holy Spirit in their life?** The Holy Spirit was promised to everyone; men, women, boys, and girls who believe and follow God.
3. **How long was the Holy Spirit promised to be with us?** The Holy Spirit was promised to be with us forever.
4. **What does the Holy Spirit help believers to remember?** The Holy Spirit helps believers to remember and do everything that Jesus said.
5. **What does the Holy Spirit help believers to know?** The Holy Spirit helps believers grow in their knowledge of God and

- trust they are His children.
6. **What does the Holy Spirit help believers to do?** The Holy Spirit gives believers the power to turn from sin and share their faith.
7. **How does the Holy Spirit help us when we sin?** The Holy Spirit shows and corrects us when we sin.
8. **How does the Holy Spirit help us when we are sad, scared, or worried?** The Holy Spirit gives us peace and comfort.
9. **What happened to God's people after Jesus ascended and the Holy Spirit came?** Many people became followers of God and the church multiplied.
10. **How do you know that a believer is following and obeying the Holy Spirit?** They will show and share the Fruit of the Spirit.
11. **What are the nine Fruit of the Spirit?** They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
12. **What are gifts of the Holy Spirit?** They are wisdom, words of

- knowledge, faith, discernment, healing, miracles, prophecy, speaking in tongues, and interpreting tongues.
13. **Where do the gifts of the Spirit come from?** Each of the gifts of the Spirit come from the Holy Spirit.
14. **Why do we have the gifts of the Spirit?** The gifts of the Spirit bless and build up God's people—the church.
15. **What does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit?** The Spirit of God has filled the believer's life and they have His presence living in them.
16. **Who can be baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit?** All people who believe and follow God.
17. **What happened to the disciples when they were baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit?** They spoke in tongues—an unknown prayer language.
18. **Can someone learn or be taught to speak in tongues?** No, speaking in tongues is an unknown prayer language that comes only from the Holy Spirit.

SALVATION

1. **When did God choose to love His children and desire to spend eternity with them?** God has loved His children and has desired to spend eternity with them before creation.
2. **What is sin?** Sin is saying "no" to God's commands and choosing to follow our own desires.
3. **Who sins?** According to the Bible, all people sin and are born into sin.
4. **What happens because of sin?** Because of sin, all people are separated from God and the world was cursed.
5. **What is the consequence of sin?** The Bible says that the consequence of sin is death.
6. **What does it mean to have faith in Jesus?** Having faith in Jesus comes by believing and trusting He is God's Son, that He died on the cross for all people, that He rose from the

dead, and that He is Lord.

7. **How did people show their faith in God before Jesus died?** In the Old Testament, people showed their faith in God by believing and obeying His commands.
8. **Why did they sacrifice animals before Jesus died?** Animal sacrifices represented Jesus' death on the cross, the perfect sacrifice that came later.
9. **What was required in order for sins to be forgiven?** Sins could not be forgiven without the shedding of blood.
10. **How did Jesus give the forgiveness of sin to all people?** Jesus lived a perfect life and died on the cross to pay for the punishment of sin.
11. **Did Jesus deserve to die on the cross because of something He had done?** No, Jesus was holy and without sin, so He did not deserve to die.
12. **Who can experience salvation?** Anyone who believes in Jesus can be saved.
13. **Does Jesus' death forgive us of all of our sins?** Yes, Jesus' death has given us all that we need to experience the forgiveness of sin.

14. **Can we experience salvation just by saying and doing good things?** No, salvation only comes through faith and belief in Jesus.
15. **What does it mean to repent?** When we repent, we turn away from sin and the things that do not honor God's commands.
16. **What happens to people who do not turn away from sin and believe in Jesus?** People who do not turn away from sin and believe in Jesus will be judged by God and separated from Him forever.
17. **What is promised for those who have faith and belief in Jesus?** God's children are promised new bodies and to live in heaven with Him forever.
18. **Will God's children ever be free from sin?** Yes, when Jesus returns, we will be free from sin and suffering; all of heaven and earth will be made new.
19. **What is one Scripture that proves that God will forgive if we repent and confess our sins to Him?** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

THE FATHER

1. **How is God our Father?** He is the creator of everyone and everything and He loves all that He has made.
2. **Is the Father greater or more important than the Son or the Holy Spirit?** No, each person of the Trinity is fully God and all are important.
3. **If God is our Father, what does that make us as believers?** We are His children.
4. **How are we God's children?** We are adopted into the family of God when we become believers.

5. **How does the name "Father" help us understand how God sees all people?** The name "Father" helps us understand God's love, care, and concern for all people.
6. **Can we ever fully understand God as our Father?** No, God is our Heavenly Father and He is the perfect father, so we can never fully understand Him.
7. **How does the Father love His children?** He loves His children with a perfect and everlasting love that will not stop.
8. **How does the Father care for His children?** He cares for His children by seeing them, knowing them, and providing for them.
9. **What does the Father give His children?** He gives His children gifts and eternal life.

10. **What kind of gifts does the Father give His children?** He always gives gifts that are good and perfect.
11. **Why does the Father discipline His children?** So that we can learn to be more like Him and experience His blessings.
12. **Where is the Father?** The Father is in heaven.
13. **Who did the Father send into the world?** The Father sent the Son (Jesus) into the world.
14. **Where did the Son go when His work on Earth was finished?** He returned to the Father and the Holy Spirit was sent into the world.
15. **What is another name for Father that we can also find in the Bible?** Abba is another name for Father.

THE CHURCH

1. **Is the church a building?** No, although we can go to a building to worship God, He does not live in a building; God's Spirit lives in those who believe in Him.
2. **What is the church?** The church is the family of God; people who believe and practice His teachings.
3. **How is the church God's family?** We have been adopted as God's children and are to love one another like brothers and sisters.
4. **Why must believers love and care for each other?** Jesus commanded us to love one another and told us that this is how people will know that we are His followers.
5. **When did the church begin?** In the New Testament, the

church began when Jesus called His disciples to follow Him and His work.

6. **Why does the church exist?** The church exists to honor and glorify God.
7. **How does the church glorify God?** The church glorifies God by spending time together worshipping, growing, and sharing their faith with the world.
8. **Who is the leader of the church?** Jesus is the leader of the church.
9. **What instructions did Jesus give to the church before He left earth?** He told the church to go into all of the world, share the Good News, and make disciples.
10. **How does the church make disciples?** The church makes disciples by telling others about Jesus and by showing and sharing His love with the world.
11. **What is another name for the church?** In the Bible, the church is called the body of Christ.

12. **Why is the church called the body of Christ?** The church is called the body of Christ because Jesus is the leader and each believer helps to complete Christ's mission.
13. **Is one member of the church body more or less important than another member?** No, each part of the body of Christ plays an important role and is necessary for the church to function.
14. **Why is it important to listen to leaders in the church?** It is important to listen to leaders because Jesus gave them to the church.
15. **Why did Jesus give leaders to the church?** Jesus gave leaders to the church to prepare, grow, and unite believers in the faith.
16. **What did the church receive on the Day of Pentecost?** The church received power to do the Lord's work.

DISCIPLESHIP

1. **Why is it important that we grow in our relationship with God and others?** So that we can become mature Christians like Jesus.
2. **How do we grow in our relationship with God and others?** The Holy Spirit helps us to change and to be more like Jesus.
3. **What is prayer?** Prayer is the way we talk and listen to God.
4. **What happens when we pray?** When we pray, we pour our hearts out to God and He listens to us.
5. **What do we do when we pray?** When we pray to God, we offer praise, make requests, share our confessions, and give

thanks to Him.

6. **How do we offer God praise when we pray?** We offer God praise when we glorify Him for who He is and what He has done.
7. **How do we make requests to God when we pray?** We make requests to God when we share our needs and desires with Him and ask for His help.
8. **How do we share our confessions with God when we pray?** When we make confessions to God, we admit and repent of our sinful actions or desires that break His commands.
9. **How do we offer God thanksgiving when we pray?** We offer God thanksgiving by expressing our gratitude and thanks to Him.
10. **When can we pray?** We can pray to God whenever we would like; He hears us all of the time.

11. **What is the Bible?** The Bible is God's word; a book by multiple authors who were inspired in their writings by God.
12. **Is the Bible just like any other ordinary book?** No, the Bible is God's living word; the scriptures are for God's children even today.
13. **Why is it important for us to read and study the Bible?** The Bible gives us advice and wisdom for how we can best honor God with our lives.
14. **What is fellowship?** Fellowship is when God's children worship together and spend time with one another.
15. **Why is fellowship important for God's children?** Fellowship is how God's children encourage and help one another spiritually.

THE SACRAMENTS

1. **What is Communion?** Communion is when we remember the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus.
2. **Why is Communion sometimes called the Lord's Supper?** Communion was part of the last meal that Jesus shared with His disciples before He died.
3. **What were Jesus and the disciples celebrating when they shared the Last Supper together?** They were celebrating Passover—a feast that celebrates Israel's freedom from Egyptian slavery.
4. **What happens when we participate in Communion?** We are following Jesus' command and eating the same meal He shared with His disciples before He died.
5. **What does the bread represent?** The bread represents

Jesus' body that was broken for us.

6. **What does the cup represent?** The cup represents Jesus' blood that was shed for us as a sacrifice.
7. **At the Last Supper, what did Jesus do to His disciples?** Jesus washed His disciples' feet.
8. **Did the disciples want Jesus to wash their feet?** No, but Jesus insisted on washing their feet so that He could teach them.
9. **What was Jesus teaching the disciples when He washed their feet?** He was teaching them to serve one another.
10. **How was Jesus teaching the disciples to serve one another?** Jesus, who is Lord and Master and greater, washed their feet and set an example.
11. **What does feet washing represent?** Feet washing represents service and the community we have with each other as followers of Jesus.
12. **What is baptism?** Baptism is when a believer is immersed in water just as Jesus practiced and instructed.

13. **Who baptized Jesus?** Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.
14. **What happened when Jesus was baptized?** The heavens opened, the Spirit of God descended like a dove on Jesus, and the Father declared His love for His Son.
15. **Does baptism give us salvation?** No, salvation only comes through faith and belief in Jesus.
16. **In what name are believers baptized?** Believers are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
17. **What does baptism represent?** Baptism is how we identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
18. **How does baptism represent our spiritual death?** When we go down in the water, this represents our life before we had faith in Jesus which we are burying.
19. **How does baptism represent our resurrection as believers?** When we come out of the water, this represents the new life that we have through faith in Jesus.

KEEPING THE GOSPEL CENTRAL



A Blueprint for Developing a Gospel-Centered Children's Ministry

I was introduced to the gospel at a young age. I vividly remember the moment when, at the young age of five, I knelt in a classroom at the church and invited Jesus into my heart. From that moment on, my life was forever changed. As I grew older, my appreciation for the gospel deepened, and my passion for children's ministry blossomed. I witnessed firsthand the transformative power of God's love in my own life, and I longed to share that same love with others, especially children. My journey with Christ ignited a fervent desire to serve in children's ministry—to play a role in shaping young hearts and minds for eternity.

In the bustling world of children's ministry, it is easy to get caught up in the excitement of planning the next big event, crafting the perfect lesson, and creating experiences that will leave a lasting impression on the kids we serve. In KidMin circles, there is a prevailing emphasis on innovation and creativity, with endless discussions about the latest trends and techniques.

Yet, amidst all the hustle and bustle, it is all too easy for the essence of the gospel to become overshadowed. Despite our best intentions, we may find ourselves inadvertently sidelining the very message that lies at the core of our faith—the good news of Jesus Christ. It is a sobering reality that calls for a recalibration of our approach to children's ministry, a recommitment to placing the gospel firmly at the center of all that we do.

Keeping the Gospel at the Core of Teaching

When it comes to teaching children, it is essential to prioritize the Gospel above all else. While imparting values and virtues holds significance, these teachings find their true meaning and context within the framework of the gospel. We must ensure that our curriculum reflects this priority.

Gospel-centered teaching goes beyond mere moral instruction; it encompasses the transformative power of Christ's message. It is about nurturing a deep understanding of God's love, grace, and redemption. Every lesson, every activity, should ultimately point back to the central narrative of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

By grounding our teaching in the gospel, we provide children with a solid foundation—a framework through which they can understand their identity as beloved children of God. It is not just about imparting knowledge; it is about instilling faith and fostering a lifelong relationship with Christ.

Keeping the Gospel Central in Relationships

In the bustling dynamics of ministry, it is easy for relationships to become transactional or superficial. However, as stewards of the gospel, we are called to embody Christ's love in our interactions with others.

This applies not only to our relationships with children but also to our volunteers, parents, and church leaders.

Keeping the gospel central in our relationships means extending grace, forgiveness, and compassion—the very qualities exemplified by Jesus himself. It is about seeing each person through the lens of God’s unconditional love and treating them with the same kindness and humility that Christ demonstrated.

When conflicts arise or misunderstandings occur, a gospel-centered perspective reminds us to prioritize reconciliation and unity. It is hard to hold grudges or harbor resentment when we are committed to loving others as Christ loves us.

Keeping the Gospel Central in Personal Life

As ministers of the gospel, it is imperative that we not only teach it but also live it out in our daily lives. Our personal walk with Jesus sets the tone for everything we do in ministry. If we neglect our own spiritual growth and relationship with God, we risk becoming mere performers, outwardly showcasing the gospel while lacking its transformative power within.

Keeping the gospel central in our personal lives means prioritizing prayer, time in the Word, and worship. It means cultivating a heart of humility and obedience, constantly surrendering to God’s will and seeking his guidance in all things.

It is easy to get caught up in the busyness of ministry, to become consumed by the demands of the job. However, if we are not careful, we can inadvertently replace our love for the ministry with our love for the Lord. Keeping first things first requires a daily commitment to place Jesus at the center of our lives, allowing his love and grace to permeate every aspect of our being.

Remember, It Is All about the Gospel!

I love children’s ministry. I love all of you who work

with kids and families week after week. In the week-to-week work of children’s ministry, amidst the smiles and activities, let us not lose sight of the central thread—the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us make it our priority to keep the gospel at the forefront of our teaching, our relationships, and our personal lives.

As we do this, we can trust that God will work wonders in the hearts of the children we serve, transforming lives and shaping futures. After all, it is not the flashy programs or elaborate setups that leave a lasting impact—it is the timeless truth of the gospel, faithfully proclaimed and lived out in love.

Let us commit ourselves anew to the task of developing a gospel-centered children’s ministry—one where Jesus is not just a part of the equation but the very heart and soul of everything we do. For in the end, it is all about the gospel—the good news that has the power to change lives and eternities.

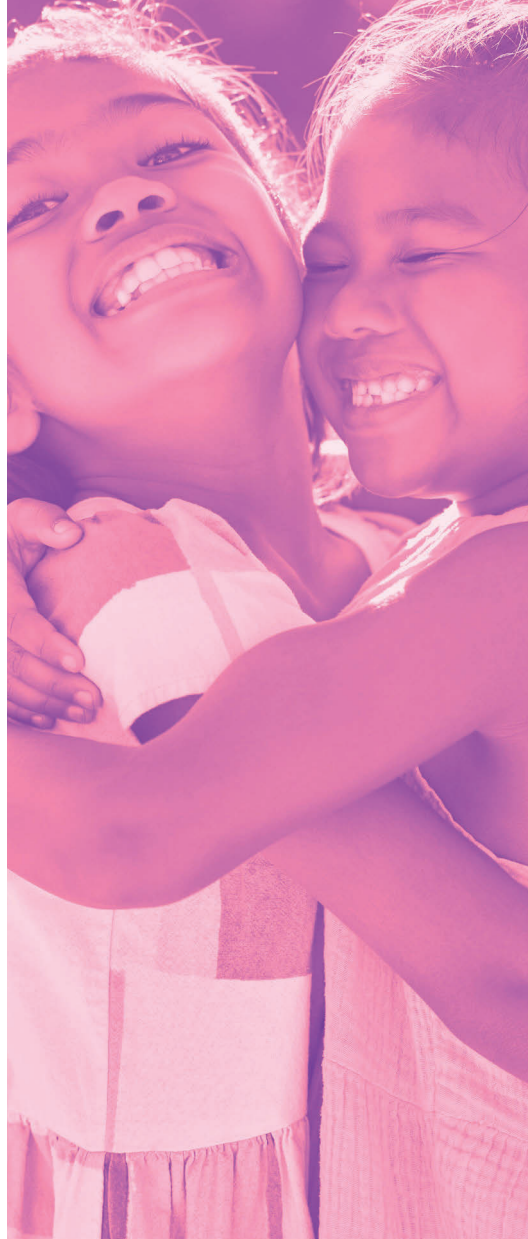
In closing, let us draw inspiration from the apostle Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians: “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2 NASB). In the ever-evolving landscape of children’s ministry, let us anchor ourselves in this timeless truth—the gospel of Jesus Christ. May it be the driving force behind every lesson taught, every relationship nurtured, and every endeavor undertaken. For ultimately, it is all about the gospel—the good news that has the power to change lives for eternity.



Ryan Frank
CEO/Publisher of KidsMatter

Ryan Frank is a pastor, publisher, and an entrepreneur. He serves as the CEO and publisher of KidzMatter. Ryan and his wife, Beth, are the publishers of KidzMatter Magazine and the creators of The KidzMatter Conference.





EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP OF CHILDREN

Breathe in. . . . Breathe out. . . . Now repeat. For those of us serving in children's ministry and parenting kids, it is often hard for us to feel like we can catch our breath in certain seasons of life and ministry. We go from season to season, all while still maintaining normal weekly schedules and somehow managing to have personal lives. It is overwhelming and exhausting but also fulfilling!

While our calendars are ever growing, it can become easy for us to focus on events and routines without considering if discipleship is taking place in our lives and in the lives of our children. Isn't that why we stay

so busy with church, ministry, and all our activities anyway? Hopefully so, but we must continually evaluate to see if we are actively discipling kids, or if we are just checking off the boxes on our list. There are a few key elements that we must use if we want effective discipleship to occur in the children we know and love:

Prayer

Discipleship is a divine process that requires the work and help of the Holy Spirit. Although God uses us as parents and ministers to disciple, we are dependent on him alone to complete this work in our children. This means our discipleship processes, plans, events, and

conversations need to be covered in intentional prayer. We need people surrounding our children, our families, and our ministries who are praying daily for Christ to be the focus of their lives and that they will continually pursue him.

Find those individuals in your community of faith, as well as your family and extended family, who have the gift of intercession and who are not afraid to pray on behalf of this generation of kids. Even as you pray yourself, asking God to help you make disciples, you will become more directed in the methods and processes you use.

Along with inviting others to pray, children must also begin to form and develop their own rhythms and times of prayer. This is modeled in our churches, homes, and everyday life when we invite Jesus to be at work in our own lives and seek to live and respond as he did while on earth. Welcoming Jesus as our leader and guide comes by reading Scripture and simply asking him; let kids hear these prayers and see you live it out day by day.

Relationship

Jesus modeled through his own disciples the power of relationship, and this is how he prepared them to fulfill kingdom work even after he left earth. He spent time with them, he asked tough questions, and he held them accountable. It does not matter what your role is in the life of a child—you could be a parent, a children's pastor/minister, a lead pastor, a family member, or even just a faithful member of the church congregation—that is enough! If you have children in your life, then you have a responsibility to be a relational influence on them. Look around and see the children who are there and invite them to come alongside of you and your faith journey. Spend time with them, ask them tough questions, and hold them accountable just as Christ did.

Content

Of course, what we are teaching and modeling to kids matters. Being lifelong followers of Jesus means we know his word—the Bible! Our kids need more than just Bible stories and a few verses committed to memory; they need a commanding knowledge of the Bible. A commanding knowledge of the Bible leaves our kids knowing how to respond and react as followers of Jesus. This means we are responsible for teaching them biblical principles and scriptural truths, as well as showing them how to use and study the Bible for themselves. Sure, this can be done randomly at times and throughout sudden, day-to-day conversations with kids, but certain aspects of this will require some intentionality and work on our part.

We need to determine how we will present content and what content is most crucial; we need a plan that is developmentally and spiritually on target with our kids' needs and who we want them to become as followers of Jesus. As you develop relationships with the kids in your life, take note of their needs, giftings, and things they need to learn on their faith journeys and begin to implement these things in your times with them.

Service

Jesus modeled a life that was centered around reaching and blessing others. As we disciple kids, we need to remember that they too can minister and love those around them, near and far. Children are often considered to be the weakest and most vulnerable members of society, but they can learn so much by giving and helping those around them who also cannot care for themselves. With the help of the influencers in their lives, they can become individuals who bless their community, world, church, family, and friends. It is up to us to provide them with these opportunities to stretch their “service muscles” and to learn to look and see the needs around them.

There is no job or person too small and outside of their reach. Children are naturally egocentric especially when younger, but as they grow and form mentally and begin to develop empathy and compassion, we should use that as a driving force to propel them to become lifelong servants.

The opportunity to disciple kids is just that—an opportunity. Yes, it is scripturally ordained and something we cannot ignore, but it is also an open door that God has given us to come alongside a generation and equip them for the work he has prepared for them. We all have our shortcomings and will not always “get it right”; in fact, there will be times we fail. However, as we begin to take the discipleship of our children seriously, we can count on the Holy Spirit who is actively at work in our lives and in the lives of our children making us Christlike.



Joy Hensley
English Language Training Specialist

Joy Hensley is the Associate Pastor of Children at her local church, Spring Place Church of God of Prophecy. She has actively served in local churches, camps, and various ministry environments. In July of 2016, Joy completed her Master of Arts degree in Ministry Studies from Lee University. Her desire is to develop and build relationships with children, their families, and volunteers that point them not only towards a growing relationship with God, but also fulfilling God's call for their own lives.



THE POWER OF DISCIPLING KIDS IN WORSHIP

I believe there are many spiritually malnourished Christians in the church. Before you raise your eyebrow at me in skepticism or quickly jump to agree, let me explain. I have stepped foot in far too many American churches where I look around the sanctuary during a service, and I see people experiencing a worship set, but they do not join in to participate in the song of heaven—“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!”—while on earth.

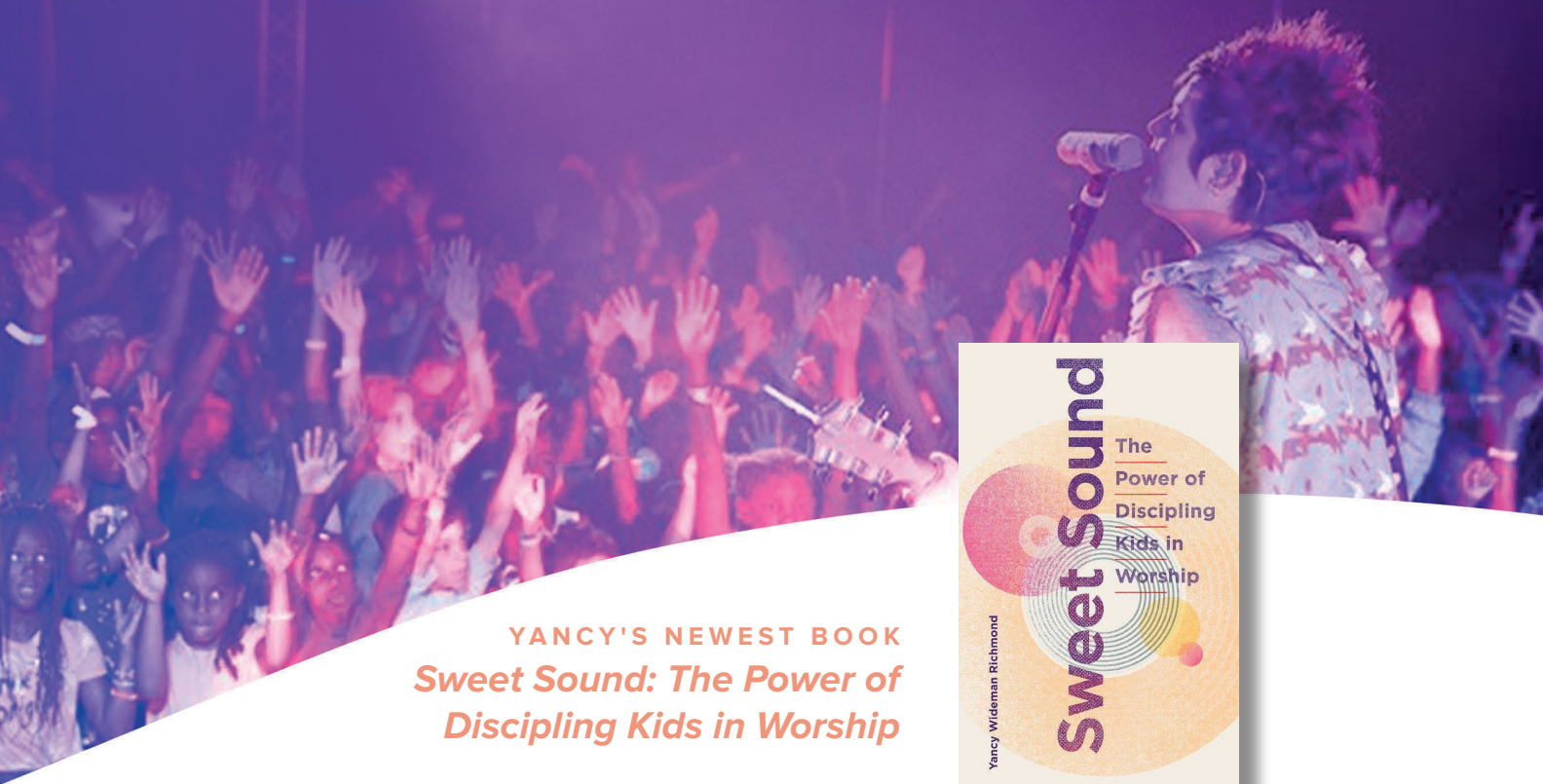
This view is not limited to a local church. I have encountered the same experience while attending ministry conferences where I am surrounded by people who love Jesus and the church so much, they answer a call to work in ministry full time. I recently led worship at such an event, and my heart broke when I saw a lack of passion from these leaders to do one of the things their life was created to do: Give God glory and praise! Worship is not a spectator sport. Worship is an activity of creation.

I often consider how we got here. Most every church has a time of worship. They dedicate minutes or line items on service planning sheets for worship to occur. I am thankful for that. From time to time, many even have a message or even a series on worship. I am grateful for that. However, these teachings are often few and far between. Hosea 4:6 says, “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” (KJV). You may have heard it

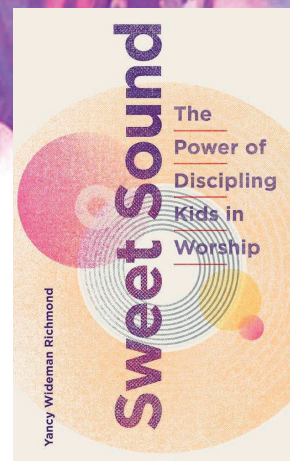
quoted as “perish.” When you lack proper nutrition, you perish. That is a plain and simple truth that parallels the spiritual life as well.

The way I see it, we have a generation of believers who have become picky eaters because they will only sing when it is a hymn they approve of, the leader is their preferred choice, or the lights and sound are to their preference. You can insert whatever superficial excuse of your liking, but the outcome is the same. We have to do more than just make the space for worship to happen in our services. We have to talk about, teach, and offer revelation about what worship is, why it matters in their life, and how to take part in it. This happens through special messages about worship, but even more through regular weekly nuggets shared between songs, inviting your congregation to join you in specific actions and reminding them of their God ordained purpose. I believe this is a key factor missing in many congregations. It is also an easy fix. All that is needed is some intentionality in how you lead. Revelation is what so many Christ followers need.

I have led all ages in worship in my years as a Christ follower and pastor’s kid. Music was always my thing and, therefore, worship was one of the main areas I served. I remember specifically the day I came across a verse in the Bible that changed my perspective. In that particular season, I was on staff at a church overseeing



YANCY'S NEWEST BOOK
*Sweet Sound: The Power of
Discipling Kids in Worship*



all the worship for students, young adults, and kids. I can still describe in detail my office and the view out my window.

Have you ever read a scripture that stopped you in your tracks and made you realize you needed to back up, rewind the tape, and read the words again to make sure the verse really said what you thought it said? This was that kind of moment for me. Psalm 8:1–2 in *The Message* says, “God, brilliant Lord, yours is a household name. Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble.”

Did you catch that? It is pretty powerful stuff. I also do not believe it is limited to babies and toddlers. It is just as much as true for first graders and even fifth graders that may be giving you some trouble. There is power in their worship. Every time you push play on a song or time of worship in class, you are unleashing God’s power to be at work in your classrooms. As you help put the praise of God on their lips, the goodness of God is being declared in such a way that even those who do not believe in God will be impacted and transformed. Sign me up for that!

I have dedicated my life to helping kids fall in love with Jesus one song at a time. I am passionate about helping leaders and parents cultivate a love for Jesus in their kids by being intentional about what they push play on, challenging them to talk about it and encouraging them to teach and disciple in kids a heart of worship. Why? Because Scripture tells us there is power in the worship of kids. If you study Psalm 8:2 and look at the words used in the various translations,

you will see words used to describe their worship as “ordained, perfected, fashioned, created, composed.” I want to say “yes” to what God has ordained. I want to experience the things that he has perfected. I want to help this generation experience his presence because when they experience God’s presence, they taste and see that he is good. When they taste and see that he is good, they will hunger and thirst for more of him. I am convinced of this.

A few months back I was serving in kids’ worship at my church. One of my son’s friends came to me after the service with the biggest smile on his face and said, “I felt God’s presence during worship today.” This boy was not going to show up to church the next Sunday with the same old anticipation. This experience marked him in a significant way. I believe this encounter will continue to leave him with an expectation and longing for more of God.

Last summer, I was leading worship at a preteen camp. On the last night, a girl came up to me and told me flat out, “On the first day, I wasn’t excited about worship. But I had listened to what you had shared about it, session by session. That night, I accepted your challenge and took a step. I participated in worship and was moved.” This student had leaned in that night, and there was a transformation. Her **understanding** changed, which meant her **actions** changed, so her **experience** changed, and, therefore, her **life** was changed.

One of the most powerful things you will ever do in ministry is create space for worship to happen. God inhabits our praises. If you want to help this generation



“Worship
discipleship
is the study,
practice,
and
discipline
of giving
reverent
honor to
God.”

know God, help them learn how to worship him. It never fails, as we worship him, he ministers to us. There is a beautiful exchange that happens. Help them encounter who he is. Stop looking for a new game or amazing, shiny video. Stop worrying about all the volunteer slots that you need to fill. Start looking for ways to engage kids in worship so they can be touched by the presence of their heavenly Father who wants a relationship with them. Pray over your song choices and how you will lead the worship sets. God will speak to you and guide you. You just have to listen.

Worship discipleship is the study, practice, and discipline of giving reverent honor to God. Is that how you would define your VBS worship? Is that how you would describe the songs you sing on Sunday morning? Spend some time evaluating and gaining vision for this area. There is so much at stake. I truly believe we will give an account to Jesus for how we steward the moments we have. We have a responsibility to raise up this generation to know Jesus and to live passionately for him. They cannot do that without worship being a part of their life. Psalm 150:6 beckons, “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD” (NIV). This is an issue that matters to the heart of God. It is an area that his Word says has power. Our work is not done until that verse has been accomplished.

Are you ready? Are you willing to help this generation become the worshiper God created them to be?

There is **so much more** awaiting us at the table. It is time to pull up a chair and get ready to partake of all God has for us and those that he has placed under our care.

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Yancy Wideman Richmond
Worship Leader & Songwriter

Yancy is a worship leader and songwriter for kids who travels the globe doing family concerts and training worship leaders. Every week her songs are used in thousands of churches around the world. Her Dove Award winning music helps kids fall in love with Jesus one song at a time. Yancy authored the book *Sweet Sound: The Power of Discipling Kids in Worship* to help your church raise every generation to be worshipers. She lives with her husband and sons in Nashville, Tennessee. For more information, visit YancyMinistries.com.

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WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT CHILD DISCIPLESHIP?

Over the past decade in the children's ministry world, there has been a phrase frequently used in our discussions of child discipleship. The phrase is this: "the presence of a loving, caring adult." Let me share an example with you from the book, *Resilient*.

Clean water? Medical care? Food for kids living in poverty? Access to the gospel? Shelter or education? An eradication of poverty? What choice would you make to have the greatest impact on a child's resilience and future? Be careful. The answer is not as obvious as it seems. One factor is significantly more impacting than any of the others. In fact, in many cases it creates receptivity to the gospel. The most significant factor in a child's resilience is a strong relationship with a caring adult. Even in the presence of a significant number of risk factors—poverty, hunger challenges, disease, lack of education or even family ties—having a close relationship with a loving, caring adult can help develop the strength a child needs to face significant threats and overwhelming challenges.¹

In March 2015, Harvard's Center on the Developing Child released a study that stated, "Every child who winds up doing well has had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult." Additionally, in a recent study by Barna on youth who were classified as resilient disciples from the ages of 18 to 29, 77% reported, "When growing up, I had close personal friends who were adults from my church,

parish or faith community."

Returning to the book *Resilient*, the author summarizes the presence of a loving, caring adult so beautifully in just one short phrase saying, "We are loved into loving Jesus."

As you read this issue of the *White Wing Messenger* and its focus on child discipleship, you may be wondering, "What can I do?" If you are a pastor, children's minister, volunteer, or even a parent, you will most certainly find articles aimed at you. However, if you do not so easily fit into one of those categories, it might be easy to discard this issue as irrelevant.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Our journey of faith is not intended to be a solitary one. It is marked by encounters with fellow believers who guide, support, and inspire us along the way. For the purposes of this article, we are going to focus on those people who helped form lasting faith in many of us when we were children. As a child, these individuals may have come into your life in various forms as parents, siblings, friends, mentors, pastors, teachers, and even strangers. They were the vessels through which God's light shone into your life, showing you the way and deepening your understanding of God's boundless love.

This is where I insert my disclaimer: I know not everyone reading this article had the privilege of a

Christian upbringing and community. However, I have to admit my suspicions that if you are reading this magazine, then you are a follower of Christ. If you did not have someone in your life as a child to model your faith after, surely you have had someone later in your life that inspired your walk. And if this describes you, I hope you will determine to be for a child what no one was for you.

Growing up in a pastoral family, I have had many people who helped form my faith. Recently, I was reminded of one special lady named Earlene King who impacted my life significantly. Earlene was many wonderful things to many people, including the treasurer of her local Church of God of Prophecy in Columbia, Tennessee, for over 50 years. She faithfully served in an elementary school as a librarian. A beautiful singer and thoughtful public speaker, most times she was content to worship quietly from her pew.

I remember her best as a faithful teacher. As her deacon-husband would work around the church on various projects, Earlene spent many hours each week in her basement classroom preparing for her upcoming Sunday School class. Earlene was crippled from the effects of polio as a child, so getting down the stairs was a slow process for her, yet she climbed up and down the stairs each week as she lovingly decorated posters, meticulously cut out crafting materials, and carefully organized her student's supplies—every week.

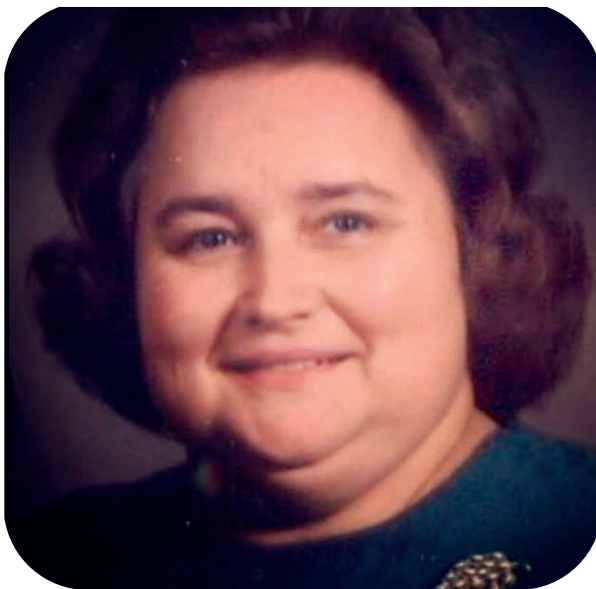
My father was Earlene's pastor, and we lived in the parsonage (the home provided to the pastor) located next door to the church. Whenever I saw Earlene and her husband's car at the church, I often found my way to her basement classroom. Many times, throughout my teen years, she would let me sit with her and observe as she prepared her lesson. She was encouraging and kind. She was faith-filled and would quote scriptures to me that were relevant to whatever issue I was going through.

As a young boy trying to figure out my calling to serve kids in the church, I learned much from observing my wise friend who went to Heaven several years ago. Earlene was an example of a dedicated, excellent, gifted Christian educator, servant, and Jesus follower.

Her influence, ministry, and impact continue to inspire me on my journey, and it all began with her presence and interest in my life.

Was someone there for you along the way? Was there a certain person who made you feel noticed and special? Was there someone who loved you into loving Jesus? Think back to those pivotal moments in your life when your faith was tested, when doubts crept into your mind, or when your spirit felt weary. In those moments, who were the ones who stood by you, offering words of encouragement, lending a helping hand, or simply being the love of Jesus?

What can you do about child discipleship? It is not complicated, and it is not for a select few. We can all do perhaps the most important work of child discipleship... **be present.**



Look around you. Where are the children that God has placed in your life? The children you want to see know God and serve him? With this magazine, we encourage you to take a step to form a relationship with those children and, in doing so, watch as God opens doors for you to share his transformational love with them.

"It begins now, here, and with you! It begins with the very next child God brings across your path. Every child you encounter is a divine appointment."²

¹ Valerie Bell, Chris Marchand, Matt Markins, and Mike Handler, *Resilient: Child Discipleship and the Fearless Future of the Church*, Awana Clubs International (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Company, 2020), 87–94.

² Wess Stafford, *Too Small to Ignore: Why Children Are the Next Big Thing* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2005), 9.



Bishop Shaun McKinley, PhD
International Children's Ministries Director

Dr. Shaun McKinley serves as international director of Children's Ministries and administrative liaison to the Presiding Bishop at the Church of God of Prophecy International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee. He and his wife, Stephanie, serve as preschool teachers at the Peerless Road Church, also in Cleveland.

THE BRIGHT FUTURE OF THE CHURCH



cgpkids

“Children are the future of the church.” This is a comment frequently made in congregations, but one often met with sighs, frustration, or irritation by those who serve kids. While it is not intended to cause harm or disrespect by well-meaning leaders, those passionate about children’s ministry usually feel it overlooks the contributions that children can make to the church community NOW.

Children can serve and contribute to the life and ministry of the church. They can serve as ushers, greeters, worship team members, mission givers, musicians, janitors, preachers, and so much more. They can be fervent intercessors and bold witnesses. Beyond their present contributions, serving also helps children prepare for future works the Lord has prepared for them. Many adults presently serving in ministry begin to explore their spiritual gifts and interests through opportunities given to them as children or teens.

Recently, Regina Italiano, Pee Wee Kamp Director for the Church of God of Prophecy in Mississippi, shared the following invitation she gave to ten-year-old Caleb Head to serve at camp:

I want to share the story of a remarkable young man named Caleb, who lives in our state. Caleb serves in our local church as a greeter; he takes up offerings during adult service and mentors younger children in the children’s church. Caleb also recently gave a challenging message to our congregation, which most adults found difficult to submit to. While it was not a long message, he had genuinely prayed about it and tried to speak what God had laid on his heart.



When summer camps came around last year, I had a firm conviction from the Lord telling me to ask Caleb to give a devotion one night. I had seen Caleb minister and even lay hands on people to pray during altar services, so I had no concern about what he would say to his peers. When the first night of camp came, I asked Caleb if he was prepared. To my surprise, he asked me to put it off until the second night. So, when the second night came, I asked if he was ready. He pulled out a wadded-up, half-torn piece of notebook paper and asked me to read it. I could tell he had written and erased his words many times from the torn page. He told me he had something prepared, but God kept telling him to change it. That night, he gave the most beautiful and sincere devotion to salvation, which led several of his co-campers to give their lives to the Lord.

Caleb has also impacted his school with fellow students and his teachers. One of his teachers told me he talks freely about his faith at school and will minister to children around him when he feels they don’t know the Lord personally. Caleb truly understands what it means to be a disciple and lives out his faith at home, church, camp, school, and to those around him. He is such a joy to be around, and I can’t wait to watch his ministry grow.

Prayerfully look for opportunities to engage the children in your home, church, or community in service. As you do, you not only bless the church of today but help prepare your kids to lead the church into a bright future.

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VALUE^{AND} SPIRITUAL LIFE^{OF} CHILDREN

Approved by the Church of God of Prophecy International Assembly in 2014, “The Value and Spiritual Life of Children” is a doctrinal position paper that examines biblical, historical, and practical perspectives concerning children. The goal of this document is to help us develop a sound theology regarding children and their spiritual life, as well as to welcome them into the life and sacraments of the Church.



HERITAGE MINISTRIES

IN HIS PRESENCE

MINISTERS

ELMER CHARLES ATCHLEY

Alabama

March 23, 2024

Licensed minister for 20 years

GARNETT DEWEY BYRD

Tennessee

December 3, 2023

Licensed minister for 54 years

AUTRY FERRELL

Tennessee

December 29, 2020

Licensed minister for 49 years

TIM GREEN

Tennessee

March 6, 2024

Licensed minister for 30 years

BILLY LEE HARRIETT

South Carolina

March 13, 2024

Licensed minister for 50 years

WILLIAM EDWARD HARRIS

South Carolina

November 28, 2021

Licensed minister for 50 years

GEORGE E. HUGHES

South Carolina

April 2, 2024

Licensed minister for 47 years

NOREEN ORITHA KERR

Florida

February 8, 2024

Licensed minister for 17 years

CHARLES KING

North Carolina

March 29, 2024

Licensed minister for 57 years

EMMA AVIS MCDONALD

Tennessee

August 12, 2013

Licensed minister for 35 years

CLIFTON JOHNNIE MIZE, JR.

Virginia

November 4, 2023

Licensed minister for 53 years

BOBBY PATTERSON

Alabama

April 1, 2024

Licensed minister for 60 years

KIMBAL POPE

North Carolina

January 28, 2024

Licensed minister for 31 years

DAVID WAYNE PRINCE

Tennessee

November 19, 2023

Licensed minister for 49 years

JAMES D. SCOTT

Wisconsin

Date not available

LOTTON SELLERS

Tennessee

February 8, 2008

Licensed minister for 37 years

ERNEST HOWARD STEEN

South Carolina

March 4, 2024

Licensed minister for 55 years

DOUGLAS STEPHENSON

Georgia

February 8, 2023

Licensed minister for 56 years

DIXIE UPTON

Tennessee

May 12, 2014

Licensed minister for 30 years

BOBBY GENE WARMOTH

South Carolina

February 10, 2021

Licensed minister for 16 years

ODIS WEATHERFORD

South Carolina

October 18, 2023

Licensed minister for 7 years

STANLEY LONNIE WHITEHILL

Michigan

January 11, 2024

Licensed minister for 5 months

BOBBY WAYNE WILSON

Tennessee

April 3, 2020

Licensed minister for 16 years

LEONARD A. WILSON

Connecticut

November 14, 2023

Licensed minister for 29 years

MESSAGES

Marsha Robinson
Editor



The stories of the Church of God of Prophecy that have been told in the *White Wing Messenger* are illustrious and adventurous, full of twists and turns and triumphs. The chapters that told the story in a printed medium have come to completion with this May issue. With the Holy Spirit as our guide, we turn the page and move into a fearless future. We will write new visions, tell new stories, and connect new readers through the digital *White Wing Messenger*. We are fearless as we advance into new vistas to enable us to sustain this legacy of connection for our children.

And what of our children? Many have said, “Children are not the future of the church, they are the church.” While this is true, if the Lord tarries, there is still a future to come, whether we are ready or not. What will it look like? There are distressing reports every day telling us the future is bleak and devoid of joy. But the Bible tells us God intends to give our children a hopeful future—a fearless future. How do we lead our children into that hopeful, fearless future?

First of all, God’s “hopeful future” might not match our earthly ideas because his plans are far bigger than ours. His plans always glorify him. His plans for a hopeful future might be to call our children into his work at an early age and use those children to bless people more deeply and richly than we could have ever imagined. Now, that is a hopeful future!

Children are the untapped wellspring of potential within the Church of God of Prophecy. By nurturing and equipping our young ones with the tools and knowledge needed to take on leadership roles, we are investing in a future where they can fearlessly guide the Church toward growth and greater effectiveness. As we entrust our children with responsibilities within the Church, we instill in them a sense of belonging and connection. Empowering children not only benefits the individual child but also strengthens the entire church body as they bring fresh anointing, innovative ideas, and unwavering passion to the table.

God is working on a hopeful future. Will we teach our children to fearlessly join him?

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