

Healthy Churches For Children

Getting Pastors on Board

Pastors View of Children's Ministry:

Larry Fowler *Rock Solid Kids* outlines four views of children:

- Children are a bother
- Children are a tool
- Children are our future
- Children are people

1. A Healthy Environment – Getting The Foundations Right:

a/ Healthy Pictures of God

- Primary pictures of God – shaped by Father, shaped by quality of parent's marriage.
- Dabbler, Slave
Child, Partner/Friend model
- The pictures we mostly create of God - Moral Therapeutic Deism
- How God reveals himself to us (complicated concepts made simple)

b/ Healthy Picture of Church as Inclusive Biblical Community

- What is the first picture that comes into your mind when you think of the word 'church'?
- To value children we must first value community – ekklasia

Fundamental Questions:

- What is God's church to be? Missional Community
- What is God's church to do? Growing, Serving, Connecting, Sharing, Worshipping
- How will we allow God to work in and through us to do it?

The Pastors and Elder's Handbook for Children's Ministries G.C 2005 does a great job in placing the 'how' question in the context of the eight elements of Natural Church Development

“Begin with a faith community which invites children to belong and which demonstrates how Christians behave. In such a community children grow to understand and embrace its beliefs and adopt the Christ-like behaviours they have seen demonstrated.”

Lausanne Paper – Children and Evangelism

“Unfortunately, in many churches today, almost all activities for children are with their peers and the few adults who lead the programs. When they graduate . . . they go off with their peers to find a spirituality that suits them, leaving behind the congregation to which they never belonged.” May, Scottie; Posterski,

Beth,; Stonehouse,; Catherine; Cannell Linda, *Children Matter*

b/ Addressing Worldviews - Consumerism v Community

- The impact of the consumeristic worldview and healthy churches

Time=Money=Things=Happiness

Biblical Worldview

I exist to Glorify God
The greatest is a servant
Time is to be stewarded for God
People are the Treasure
commodity

Consumeristic

I exist to glorify me
I am here to be served
Time = Money
People are a

“What we build into a child’s life prior to the age of 13, represents the moral and spiritual foundation that defines them as individuals and directs their choices for the remainder of their life.”

George Barna, 2005

c/Creating a Discipleship Environment – Joining the dots – home-church - school

(separate handout)

“The future of the church depends on it’s ability to build strong homes, for strong homes will be the future of a strong church. How does your church say “Families are welcome here?”

Ben Freudenburg

“Parents are the primary Christian educators in the church, and the family is the God ordained institution for building faith in young people and for passing on faith from one generation to the next.”
Ben Freudenburg

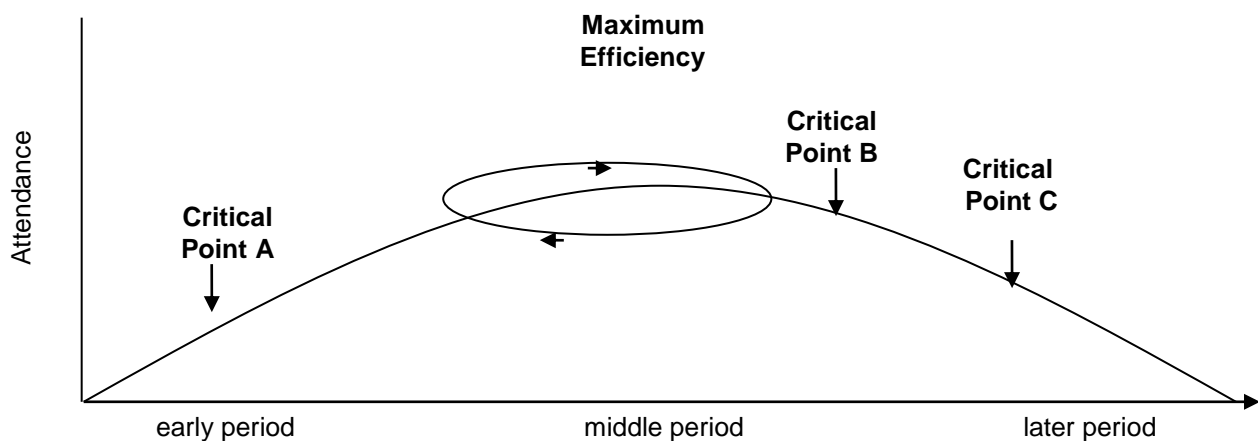
2. Vision

- What are we tuning our children into?
- If a child is a part of your church's children's ministry for a year what do you expect will happen to them?
- How will you know if this is happening and what happens if it does not?
- What stepping stones will you put in place to grow children?

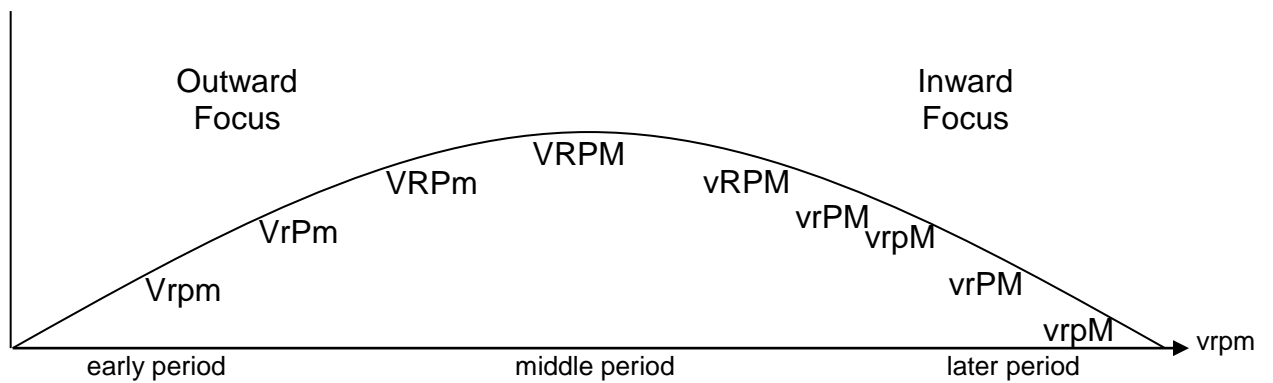
Thinking About Church Life Cycles and the Connection to Children's Ministry

All Living Organisms Have a Life Cycle
Church Is A Living Organism, Not An Institution
Churches Can Be Renewed

Critical Points



Vision, Relationships, Programmes, Management



Growing a Vision in Children's Ministries

Steve Alley in his book, *Growing a Healthy Children's Ministry*, likens VISION for our ministry to a gardener's dream. He said, "Knowing what you want to accomplish in your garden is critical. Visualizing your garden even before you turn your first shovel full of soil will keep you focused and make gardening more fruitful and rewarding."

Revitalizing On The Down Side

1. Focus On What The Church Is To 'Be' And 'Do'
2. Focus on Growing People over Programmes
3. Develop A Culture of Evaluation
4. Communicate Often

3. Synchronize Ministry

- Ministry leaders function as a leadership/management team that looks at discipleship across the life of the church – will always have implications for children
- A common language is established to rally leaders and parents around a common strategy
- Leaders, volunteers and parents are reminded consistently of how their role contributes to the overall plan.