

# THE CHURCH IN IRVINE — CHILDREN'S WORK

## INTRODUCTION

- OUR VISION:** The children's work is to cultivate and nurture our next generation. It should not simply be babysitting in order for the saints to come to the meetings. It is also not merely a Sunday school work to educate our children like in a school. On the positive side, the children's work aims to gain the neighborhood children with their families for the church. From these we can see that the children's work is greatly related to the growth of the church.
- OUR GOAL:** The goal of the children's work is to build children up in their humanity to be proper human beings. Our emphasis is to cultivate a proper humanity in the children rather than teach them with premature knowledge. Gradually, we can convey to them a deep impression that there is a God in the universe, that man fell and committed sin, and that the Lord Jesus is our Savior. Eventually we can help them to receive the Lord and be saved in a definite way.
- OUR PERSON:** In the church the most important thing is the person; the person is the way, and the person is the Lord's work. In whatever a person does, the most important thing is to have a heart. We must let God open our eyes to see the preciousness of the children and their importance in God's hands. When we see the importance and value of a certain matter, then spontaneously we have a heart for it. If you want to do this work, you must like the children, care for them, and be concerned about their affairs; this may be considered the minimum "capital" required for the children's work.
- OUR SCOPE:** When we speak of the children's work, we are referring to children who have not graduated from elementary school but are more than five years old. The place to carry out the children's work should not be limited to Lord's Day morning. A normal, proper and healthy children's work begins in the home with their parents and family; it can also be carried out during the week in the homes and neighborhoods of the saints.
- OUR LESSONS:** The lesson materials are not composed in full; they are simply guidelines. Saints who are burdened for the children should come together regularly to pray, fellowship and consider how to impart the key point(s) from the lesson.

The lessons have been prepared for 3 age groups (levels):

- (1) ELEMENTARY – 4-6 years old
- (2) INTERMEDIATE – 7-9 years old
- (3) ADVANCE – 10-12 years old

The material for the elementary level should be entirely on the child's perspective. Bible stories are not necessary at this level. Gradually as we proceed to the intermediate and advanced levels, we can give the children a little more Bible knowledge.

We should simply **impress the children with the facts in the Bible** and give them a general knowledge of the truth **without giving them too much doctrine**. For the children in the advanced group the gospel can be incorporated into the lesson, where and when appropriate.

The goal of the lessons is that the children would learn: 1) To be deeply impressed that there is God and to know who God is, 2) to see God in creation, and 3) the preciousness of man (humanity) in God's creation, showing that man is different from the animals, 4) what is proper humanity, 5) what is proper character, and, 6) to know the law (intermediate and advanced age group).

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### CARING FOR THE CHILDREN ON LORD’S DAY IN THE DISTRICTS

- NURTURE:** The entire time we spend with the children is important, not just the lesson. We are here to shepherd and nurture them to have a proper humanity and to create an atmosphere so that they would be attracted to the Lord and enjoy being with God’s people.
- CARE:** The most important qualification of a serving one is to have a caring heart. How we are with the children, through the singing, craft, snacks, walk to the park, etc. is just as important as the lesson. The entire time with the children is an opportunity for the serving ones to infuse God’s love, to mold their character, to present a pattern of proper humanity, to deposit God’s word in them little by little, and to cultivate their heart to receive the Lord’s salvation in the future.
- FAMILY:** Our children’s meeting should have a family atmosphere where you sit around the table or on the floor and talk in an informal way, with children of different age groups. The older children can help the younger ones in doing the crafts, in leading the hand motions of the songs, and serving the snack.
- NOT A SCHOOL:** Our children's meeting should not have the flavor of Sunday school (where there are grade levels and teachers and textbooks in a classroom setting). Not only should we not use Sunday school material; we should not even reference it.
- YOUNG PEOPLE:** We encourage the districts to use the young people as much as possible in the children’s work. The young people can even give the lesson to the children. One older saint with 2-3 young people could take care of 10 children.
- SCHEDULE:** In some districts, the children might join the parents for the Lord’s Table meeting in its entirety or in part, and then have their own meeting afterwards. In other districts, the children’s meeting might be concurrent with the Lord’s Table and prophesying meeting. Here is a sample of a full meeting schedule as a reference:

9:30am-9:45am	Welcome activities (simple games or coloring)
9:45-10:15am	Songs
10:15-10:35am	Snack
10:35-10:55am	Lesson
10:55-11:30am	Play or activities
11:30-Noon	Craft

- NO LEAVEN:** “A little leaven leavens the whole lump”. We should not bring anything related to Halloween, Christmas, Easter or Valentine’s Day into the children’s work. Not only should we not speak about these things with the children we should also not have any craft or snacks related to these holidays and festivals.
- SAFETY:** For the safety and welfare of the children, there must be at least 2 serving ones each week. Limit the physical contact with the children.
- DISCIPLINE:** To maintain order where all the kids can benefit, a serving one may take a child who is being disruptive away for a “timeout” if a child is not helped by a gentle admonition. Please view this as an opportunity to shepherd the child, instead of a harsh discipline. We want the children to have many happy memories of their time spent in the children’s meeting. If the child does not respond positively they should be taken to their parents.
- REPORT:** A summary report should be written every week and sent out by email to all the serving saints for continuity and improvement in our care for the children. Parents should be informed of anything special that happened with their child or any concerns.
- KIT:** Each district should prepare a kit that includes the lesson materials, a compilation of songs, suggested crafts, a chart to record attendance and memory verses, some books and games (e.g. puzzles and blocks), and some simple prizes for the children who memorize their verses or for the older ones who brought their Bibles, etc.
- 6<sup>th</sup> GRADE:** In May each year the children in 6<sup>th</sup> grade will attend a conference in the mountains. The burden for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade conference is that all the children would be saved before entering Junior High. The majority of children will be saved before attending the conference. Therefore, the conference becomes an opportunity for those not saved to be saved and to confirm and strengthen the salvation experience for those who are already saved. It is NOT necessary for the 6<sup>th</sup> graders to have completed any particular set of lessons before attending the conference. On the Lord’s Day morning we will not have a special set of lessons for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade children. They will join the advanced age group for lessons. Whenever applicable the gospel can be included in the lessons given to the advanced age group. If some parents are burdened for their children to cover the lessons “God’s Full Salvation” previously given to the 6<sup>th</sup> graders, we would recommend that those parents have a children’s home meeting during the week where they can cover those lessons with their children.

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### PREPARATION BEFORE THE CHILDREN'S MEETING

Introduction: The lesson materials were not prepared as detailed lesson plans but as a starting point for serving ones to fellowship and develop. Each lesson needs to be developed in a way that can be applied to the children in your district. Every week the serving ones need to meet together for at least thirty (30) minutes to:

- Pray together for the children and the children's meeting time.
- Fellowship about the children (condition, behavior, special needs, capacity).
- Meet with the serving ones from the previous Lord's Day to fellowship what occurred during the children's meeting that day.
- Read and pray over the verses and lesson material. (Read all three levels and review the previous levels for intermediate and advanced groups, if applicable.)
- Fellowship about how to apply the lesson. Consider your audience and use appropriate examples or stories to help the children understand the lesson. It is good to use real life examples that relate to the children. It may not be necessary to use a bible story every week.
- Select songs – they do not need to relate to the lesson but should be age appropriate.
- Prepare crafts.
- Prepare snacks – no sugary snacks or major allergy offenders like peanuts or juices or snacks with food dyes, etc. Cut up fruits with water are always good options.
- Plan some activities and games.

### PRESENTATION OF THE LESSON

Introduction: **It is not necessary to have different age groups in separate classrooms** but it is necessary to give the lesson to different age groups separately or at different times. One group of children might do the craft or play while another group of children gets their lesson.

- It is better for the lesson to be short than long. The following are suggested lengths for the lessons: Elementary – 10 minutes, Intermediate – 15 minutes, Advanced – 20 minutes.

- When giving the lesson be personal, interesting, and informal. Consider how to give the lesson without the classroom format (e.g. while taking a nature walk, while eating a snack). Do your best to engage the children. Make the lesson interactive where children are able to answer questions or express their thoughts.
- We should present the lessons in a very practical way, using many illustrations, examples and testimonies that are applicable to their daily life. Visuals can also help especially with the younger kids. Some useful visual aids are: white boards, pictures, and objects related to the lesson. Skits or plays should not be used to give a lesson.
- Stories, especially real life stories, are an excellent way to convey the lesson. Serving ones are encouraged to include a story, even one from their own experience, in the lesson. Please be careful not to tell a story which is a fairytale, fable or folklore or that includes: dragons, sorcery, or themes related to Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day or Halloween.
- It is important to bear in mind that the Lord has His own timing for each child's personal experience of Him as their Savior and life. Our burden is to build them up, primarily in their humanity, to be proper human beings and by gradually depositing the Word into the children's heart, the Lord, in His timing, could touch their conscience. We should keep sowing the Word each week until we see the Spirit convicting their hearts. We must not be too quick to lead them to salvation or to teach them about spiritual life experiences and life practices. We should wait until they are ready. To give anything prematurely to the children could spoil their personal experience of the Lord's salvation and damage them.
- We should not give the children premature knowledge about the subjective experiences of life. For example, we should not tell the children about bearing the cross, dealing with the self, or that they need to follow the sense of life.
- We should not give the children too much doctrines or teachings. Some examples of too much doctrine are 1) to give them the spiritual interpretations of the father, son, robe, ring, fatted calf when telling them the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, and 2) to tell them God is our rock because most children will understand that literally.
- We should not give the children religious concepts and thoughts. For example, God loves the good people and is angry with the bad people; or that people go to heaven when they die.
- We should avoid emphasizing the exercise of their spirit using life practices (e.g. calling on the Lord, pray-reading His word) until the children are regenerated, scaring them with details about God's judgment and the lake of fire, and bringing up holidays and festivals that are earthly and even pagan (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Valentine's Day).

Be a pattern to the children of proper humanity and one who believes in God and loves God. "...for the sake of the church life, we need to have a proper human living in this present age." (Footnote: Ephesians 6:1<sup>1</sup>)

## **THE CHURCH IN IRVINE — CHILDREN’S WORK**

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT DISTRICTING AND THE CHILDREN**

#### **What do we do if there are only 1 or 2 children in our district?**

If the children are young it would be best to see if you can care for them in your district. If the children are older and/or need to be with some other children we would recommend that 2 districts combine their children’s meeting on the Lord’s Day.

#### **How will the children in our district see the other children in the church?**

There will be opportunities throughout the year for the children to see children in the other districts. Every two months each district will blend with another district at Hall 1. The whole church will also meet together twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. During the summer the children will be together for the Summer Bible Camp. It is also possible that during the year we could arrange special events (picnic) for the children to be together. These special events will depend upon the burden of the parents to help with the arrangements.

#### **What if the children are different ages (in different grades)?**

In a family it is an exception to have children of the same age. Our view for the children’s meeting on the Lord’s Day is that the atmosphere would be like that of a family rather than a school. The younger and older children can be together with the older children helping to care for the younger children. The serving ones would be like an older brother or sister (young people and college students) or an uncle or aunt. We also hope that the children could invite their friends from school to join the children’s meeting.

#### **Who will serve?**

Saints who have both a heart for and a way with the children would be encouraged to serve. The young people can be a great help in carrying out the children’s meeting and should be encouraged to lead the singing, give the lesson, and provide the craft or activity ideas.

#### **What lessons and material will we use?**

The church has prepared a new series of lessons for the districts to use. The lessons focus more on presenting a pattern of proper humanity than bible stories and truths. Therefore, it is not necessary that the serving ones be “good teachers” with extensive knowledge of the Bible. Along with the lessons there will also be songs (with audio files), craft and activities ideas, and a supply kit for the districts to use. The districts should not introduce their own material for the children’s meeting.