

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

15 January 2009

## Purpose

To provide a Biblical ministry philosophy for the Children's Ministries of FBF.

## Age Group

Our Children's Ministry includes children from birth to 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

## A Biblical Perspective on the Church's Role in Ministry to Children

The Scripture provides little specific teaching about the role and methods of the church in ministering to children. There are, however, a number of principles taught and illustrated in Scripture that apply to this topic and which inform and guide our ministry to children.

1. Children, like all people, are sinners. The Scripture is clear that all human beings are born with a sin nature (Psa 51:5). While a newborn baby may not be capable of deliberate sinful acts, unlike older children and adults, they are sinners by nature and are spiritually dead from birth (Ephesians 2:1-3). The contemporary notion that babies and young children are either a "blank slate" or are naturally morally good, is an unbiblical idea.
2. Because children are also by nature "objects of wrath", their most urgent need is no different from an unregenerate adult: salvation through faith in Christ alone. Leading children to genuine faith in Christ must therefore be a high priority of the church. However, as with adults, salvation is not the end goal. In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded the church to "make disciples" of all the nations, not simply to evangelize. Our purpose and goal is not only to lead children to saving faith in Jesus Christ, but to teach and train them to, even from a tender age, to become disciples of Jesus. Ultimately, our desire is to see these children eventually become men and women who are mature disciples of Jesus, who serve him sacrificially for a lifetime.
3. Spiritual formation should ideally occur primarily in the environment of the family. In the Old Testament law, God made it clear that it is the responsibility of believing parents to train up a child in the knowledge of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). The New Testament affirms this Old Testament principle (Ephesians 6:1-4). Beyond the direct teaching of Scripture, the Old Testament nation of Israel and the historical church have held to the belief that families, particularly fathers and mothers, have the primary responsibility for the propagation of their faith through the training and education of their children.
4. Unbelieving children, particularly those whose parents are not believers, are a sub-group of unreached people whom the church should be intentional about reaching. When a child does not come from a family where Christian teaching is occurring in the home, the church may be the only source of spiritual nourishment in that child's life. As the Lord provides the church with opportunities to minister to the children of unbelieving parents, we should step in and assume the responsibility for the Christian

training and education of that child to the extent that we are allowed to by the parents, while at the same time seeking to also bring the parents to faith in Jesus Christ.

The Scripture is silent about the specific methods and forms of Children's Ministry in the church, therefore, as long as a church does not violate the Biblical principles guiding ministry to children, there is great freedom in HOW this education and nurture occurs. At FBF, **our Children's Ministry must align with the overall values, philosophy and ministry model of the church.**

Our goals/purposes as a church are to:

- a. Love God
- b. Love People
- c. Make Mature Disciples of Jesus

Therefore, the goals/purposes of our Children's Ministry are simple: *to teach children to love God, love people and to lead children toward maturity as disciples of Jesus Christ.* This purpose statement also helps define our ministry process.

First, we want to see children come to know and learn to love God through saving faith in Jesus Christ. Among our own church families, this ought to take place first and foremost in the home. Our role as a church is to supplement and assist parents in leading their child to saving faith in Christ. We do this through equipping, teaching and training Christian parents as we help them grow to maturity in Christ. When a child has unbelieving parents (or parents whose faith is still immature or nominal) the church must take a greater responsibility for leading that child to faith in Christ.

Second, we want to see children who love Jesus also learn to love people as Jesus loves people. While this is best taught and modeled by Christian parents, it should also be modeled by the church body as a whole. We believe that children learn to live and love in the community of faith by observing how adults express love and care for God and each other in the church. Therefore, rather than segregating children into age exclusive activities, we prefer to integrate children into the life of the Body as much as possible. While we recognize that it is important to have age-appropriate teaching and activities for kids, we believe that learning to love God and love others is best taught through the consistent modeling of Biblical Christian adult relationships in the church.

Third, we want to be intentional about moving children from spiritual immaturity toward Christian maturity. We firmly reject the notion that Children's Ministry exists to entertain the kids and keep them from distracting the adults. Since we believe that Christian beliefs and behaviors are learned through both teaching and modeling, we encourage full inter-generational participation in as many of the ministries of the church as possible. In our view, every adult at FBF bears some responsibility for the teaching and training of the children of the church, not just their own children. We do this,

actively and inactively, through the example we set in how we, as adults, live our lives inside and beyond the community of the local church.

### Sunday morning ministry to children

Sunday mornings are the primary time when FBF comes together as a body to worship the Lord and for formal Christian education in the form of classes and a sermon. Since we believe that spiritual formation in the church best occurs inter-generationally, **it is our preference to keep kids and adults together on Sunday mornings when practical.** As we are able, FBF will offer the following ministries to families on Sunday mornings:

1. A safe and secure Nursery where parents who desire to do so can leave their babies during the entire service. We recognize that infants and babies can be a distraction during the worship service and are developmentally incapable of engaging in worship. However, we do not require parents to check their babies into the nursery. We trust that parents will have the maturity and selflessness to recognize if/when their baby is becoming a distraction or hindrance to worship for others.
2. Sunday School classes for toddlers through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. We recognize that most young children simply do not have the necessary attention span to sit through a 90 minute worship service. However, we do believe there is great value to children participating in some elements of the service, particularly the singing, prayer and Bible reading. Therefore, we ask parents to not only keep their children with them during the first portion of the worship service, but to actively encourage them to participate at an age-appropriate level. Children are usually dismissed from the service to go to their classes just before the sermon begins.

Our Sunday School classes involve activities and lessons designed to further the goals of FBF with our youngest members. These classes are much more than entertainment or passing time until the adults are finished. During this time we teach lessons, learn songs and provide meaningful activities designed to teach children to love God, love people and to move them forward in their Christian maturity. Each class has spiritual goals and Biblical focus points that guide the teachers throughout the year and basic Biblical lessons students should have mastered when a child graduates to the next level.

We believe that children in 4<sup>th</sup> grade (about 9 or 10 years old) normally have the necessary attention span to sit through (and benefit from) the entire worship service. While this may be difficult for some 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders, parents can help their child to sit through the service by providing simple, non-distracting activities during the sermon. Ideas we have seen work well include:

- Allowing the child to color, draw or “doodle” quietly
- Asking the child to take very basic notes on the message, or to listen for key words or phrases
- Discussing the message as a family later on Sunday afternoon or evening
- Reading their own Bible or an age-appropriate Christian biography

Older children and teens may volunteer to serve in the nursery or as a student helper with the children's classes. However, they should not volunteer so frequently that they are consistently missing the service. We encourage families to include their children when they are serving in other Sunday morning ministries such as greeting, set-up and take-down, AV equipment and providing refreshments. FBF regularly schedules a fellowship meal following the morning service and we encourage families to participate together in this time of fellowship.

#### Mid-week ministry to older children

FBF will seek to provide a mid-week Bible study and occasional fun/fellowship/service activities for the older kids (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) as we are able. The purposes/goals for our mid-week activities remain the same as those of the entire church: *to teach the older kids to love God, love people and to move them toward becoming mature disciples of Jesus.*

We believe that the Christian life ought to be the most exciting and joyful of all lives and we want our children to experience this in their relationship with Jesus. However, we do not believe that the Christian life should be all fun and games. Too often, we have observed, ministry to children and youth is built on fun, rather than solid teaching and ministry activities that help kids mature in Christ. Our mid-week children's ministry is focused primarily on Biblical teaching and on training kids to practice fundamental spiritual disciplines such as personal Bible study, prayer, Scripture memory, serving others, evangelism and discipleship. Additional activities will be planned where students can practice what they are learning by serving the Lord and others. Since there is a large span of ages in this group, older kids may be given opportunities to lead and teach the younger kids under the supervision of an adult leader. Parents are encouraged to participate and students are welcome to bring both believing and unbelieving friends.

#### Other ministry to children

As the Lord leads, FBF may develop and participate in other children's ministry venues. Examples of this could include: Vacation Bible School, Good News Club, a children's choir, or other outreach and discipleship oriented ministries. In assessing the need and value of a new children's ministry, the primary consideration will be: does this ministry align with the goals/purposes of FBF?

#### Requirements for FBF Children's Teachers

All teachers in the FBF Children's Ministries (age 2 ½ years – 8<sup>th</sup> grade) must meet the following requirements:

1. Must give evidence through their personal testimony and lifestyle of genuine Christian faith.
2. Must be in substantial agreement with the FBF Doctrinal Statement.
3. Must be in regular fellowship at FBF.

**Faith Bible Fellowship**  
**Children's Sunday School Guidelines and Focus Points**  
**Age 2 ½ years – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade**

**Our Purpose:**

To teach and train children to love God, love people, and to move them toward becoming mature disciples of Jesus.

*Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

**Our Goals:**

1. Learn About God.

- Learn more details about what God did and who Jesus is.
- Understand the character of God.
- Learn that God's character cannot change.

2. Learn God's Word.

- Know the Bible is a special, true book about God and Jesus.
  - Journey through the entire Bible throughout the course of the program.
  - Discover and review the Bible stories in new ways.
- Understand that the Bible reveals God's will and instructions for our lives.
  - Learn the organization of the Bible (Old Testament, New Testaments, Order of the Books)
  - Learn how to find scriptures.
  - Memorize scripture.

3. Apply God's Word to Your Life.

- Develop understanding of what the scriptures mean.
  - Learn to ask, "What is God saying to me?"
  - Make a connection between the scriptures and Jesus, the reason for the scriptures.
- Discover age-appropriate ways to apply God's truth to everyday life.
  - Learn to show and share our love for the Lord with others.
  - Learn concrete ways to be obedient to God in daily life.

**Focus Points:**

The Focus Points provided on the following pages are to serve as a reference for teachers and parents outlining the key biblical lessons we would like our children to learn as they complete three years of Bible instruction at each age level in the Sunday School Program. This is in no way an exhaustive list of all that is to be taught, rather, a brief outline of main ideas appropriate for all children who attend our program.

## FBF Sunday School Curriculum Focus Points

	<b>Beginner Class (age 2 ½ -kindergarten)</b>	<b>Elementary Class (grades 1-3)</b>	<b>References</b>
<p><b>God is Powerful</b> Psalm 29 <i>The voice of the Lord is powerful...</i></p>	<p>God made everything. God made people special.</p> <p>God uses his power to help us. God makes miracles happen. God protects us and helps us be brave.</p> <p>We should listen to God.</p> <p>We should obey and serve Him.</p>	<p>God created heaven and earth. God made people special in his image.</p> <p>God uses his power to help us. God makes miracles happen. God protects us – we should not fear.</p> <p>We cannot hide from God. We should listen to God. People cannot change God. We honor God by obeying and serving Him.</p>	<p>Gen 1:1 Gen 1:27</p> <p>Isa 41:10 Luke 1:37 Pslm 46:1, Joshua 1:9</p> <p>Pslm 139 Psalm 85:8 Num 23:19, Mal 3:6 Joshua 24:24</p>
<p><b>God Loves Us</b> Romans 5:8 <i>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.</i></p>	<p>God is always with us. God gives us what we need.</p> <p>God cares for us.</p> <p>God is loving and forgiving.</p> <p>God hears our prayers.</p> <p>God keeps his promises.</p> <p>God guides us and helps us grow.</p>	<p>God is always with us. God provides all we need and more.</p> <p>God cares for us and has good plans for us. God is both just and merciful. God is loving, faithful and forgiving.</p> <p>God hears our prayers – and always answers. We may not like God’s answer, but we know it is best. God listens to all our troubles. God keeps his promises – we can always trust Him. God guides us and helps us grow.</p>	<p>Deut 31:6 Matt 6:25-34, 2 Cor 9:8</p> <p>Rom 8:28, Jer 29:11</p> <p>Luke 6:36, 1 John 1:9 Psalm 145:13, 1 Pet 5:7</p> <p>Luke 11:9 Jer 29:11</p> <p>Psalm 142, Psalm 55:22 Deut 7:9, Num 23:19</p> <p>Prov 3:5-6</p>
<p><b>God Wants Us to Obey Him</b> John 14:15 <i>If you love me, you will obey what I command.</i></p>	<p>God tells us what is good.</p> <p>God wants us to do what is right.</p> <p>Doing what is right pleases God.</p> <p>We all do wrong. We cannot blame others when we do wrong.</p>	<p>God has always had rules for people from the beginning. God decides what is good and tells us what is good. God wants all people to choose to be obedient. Our obedience pleases God and shows we love Him. We can seek God’s direction through prayer. We all sin. We cannot blame others for our sin.</p>	<p>Gen 2:16-17</p> <p>Micah 6:8</p> <p>John 14:15, 2 Pet 3:9</p> <p>Prov 21:3, Deut 6:18</p> <p>Matt 7:7</p> <p>Rom 3:23 Genesis 3</p>

<p><b>God Wants Us to Love Others</b>  1 John 4:7  <i>Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.</i></p>	<p>God wants us to love one another</p> <p>We should treat others as we want to be treated.</p> <p>God wants us to forgive others.</p> <p>God wants us to pray for others.</p> <p>God shows us how to love others.</p>	<p>God wants us to put others first.  We must love everyone – even those who do not like us.  We should treat others as we want to be treated.  God wants us to forgive others as He forgives us.  God wants us to pray for others.  What we think is as important as what we do.  We should worry more about our actions than others.  We should love others as God loves us.</p>	<p>Phil 2:3  John 13:34, Matt 5:44</p> <p>Matt 7:12, Luke 6:31</p> <p>Col 3:13, Luke 6:37</p> <p>James 5:16  Matt 5:21-22</p> <p>Matt 7:1-5</p> <p>1 Cor 13:4-8</p>
<p><b>Jesus is God's Son</b>  John 3:16  <i>For God so loved the world...</i></p>	<p>Jesus is our King.  God sent Jesus to earth for us.</p> <p>Jesus is all-powerful.  Jesus can do great miracles.</p> <p>Jesus wants us to remember Him.</p>	<p>Jesus is our King – He is God.  God sent Jesus to earth for us.  Jesus is Lord over all creation.  Jesus is all-powerful.  Jesus can do great miracles.  Jesus helps us do what is right.  Jesus wants us to remember Him.</p>	<p>John 1:14  John 3:16  John 1:1-4  Romans 8:38-39  John 10:37-38  Heb 2:18  Luke 22:19-20</p>
<p><b>Everyone Needs Jesus</b>  John 14:6  <i>I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.</i></p>	<p>Jesus died for us and rose again.</p> <p>Jesus wants us to believe in Him.</p> <p>We should repent when we do wrong.  Jesus forgives us.</p> <p>God sent the Holy Spirit to us.</p> <p>We can follow Jesus.</p> <p>Jesus helps us be brave.</p>	<p>Jesus died for our sins and defeated death.  Jesus wants us to believe in Him.  Faith is believing in Jesus even though we cannot see Him.  Repentance makes our hearts ready for Jesus.  Jesus forgives us of our sins.  Jesus saves us and sets us free.  God gives us the Holy Spirit to give us power and help us.  Following Jesus takes commitment.  We should not be ashamed of our faith in Jesus.  Jesus gives us the strength to do all things.</p>	<p>Romans 14:8-9</p> <p>John 12:46, John 14:11  Heb 11:1</p> <p>Mark 1:4, Acts 2:38</p> <p>Acts 13:38, Eph 1:7  John 11:25  John 14:26, Acts 1:8</p> <p>Luke 14:27, John 12:26</p> <p>Rom 1:16, 2 Tim 1:8</p> <p>Phil 4:13</p>
<p><b>We Are the Church</b>  Acts 2:42  <i>They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching</i></p>	<p>We pray together.</p> <p>We worship together.</p>	<p>We are to be different from the world.  We pray together and for each other.  Worshipping together strengthens our church.</p>	<p>Matt 5:13-16, Rom 12:2</p> <p>James 5:16</p> <p>Psalms 95:6, 1 Cor 14:26</p>

<p><i>and to the fellowship...</i></p>	<p>We learn together. We help those in need. We tell the world about Jesus.</p> <p>We support missionaries who tell about Jesus</p>	<p>We encourage each other in faith. We help those in need. We tell the world about Jesus with gentleness and respect. If we say we believe in Jesus, our actions must match our words. God calls people to missions and us to support them.</p>	<p>Heb 3:13 James 1:27, Deut 10:18 Mark 16:15, 1 Pet 3:15  Titus 1:16, Jam 2:21-22  Matt 28:19-20</p>
<p><b>We Worship God</b> Psalm 113:2-4 <i>Let the name of the Lord be praised...</i></p>	<p>God wants us to worship Him. There is only one God, we worship only Him. We give offering to God. We sing praise to God.</p> <p>We thank God.</p> <p>We ask God for His help.</p> <p>We learn about God from the Bible. The Bible is a true message from God to us.</p>	<p>God wants sincere worship. There is only one God, we worship only Him God wants us to give cheerfully to Him. We sing praise to God. We thank God, not just for what He provides us, but for being God. We should respond to God's blessing with joy. We should pray to God all the time for all things. We should study God's Word. The Bible is god breathed and without error.</p>	<p>Heb 12:28, Rom 12:1 Rom 3:29-31, Ex 20:2-3  2 Cor 9:7  Rom 15:11, Pslm 47:1 1 Chr 16:34  Phil 4:4  Eph 6:18, Col 4:2  2 Tim 3:14-15 2 Tim 3:16-17</p>