

**Continuing Lay Training
Ministry Module**

**The
Discipleship
Place**

Developing Children's Ministry
Introductory Comments
Dean G. Blevins

www.discipleshipplace.org



There is no clearer mandate for the church than its responsibility to nurture and shape children. From the early Old Testament command to teach the love of God to children, to Jesus' own placing of a child in the center of the disciples as a model of the kingdom of God, children rely on the love of adults much like adults rely on the very grace of God. Children, as God's own creation, arrive in need of care, just like the Christ child. Children also bring gifts as they grow, whether it is their modeled vulnerability or their exuberant creativity. To imagine a world without children would be a place bereft of play, mischief, honest dismay, and loving dependence. The church's mandate to partner with parents and care for children provides a sober reminder that holiness of heart and life might best be measured by our love of God and child.

Providing sound leadership that both guides and empowers children remains a crucial task for local congregations. All too often, children's leadership must rely on entrepreneurial, independent ministry training, often inconsistent with Wesleyan-Holiness teaching and practice. This module attempts to provide a comprehensive approach for a theologically grounded and faithful ministry to children for the sake of the kingdom of God.

This module represents the diligent effort of a team of writers from academics in cooperation with the Children's Ministries division of Sunday School/Discipleship Ministries International (SDMI) at the Global Ministry Center of the Church of the Nazarene. The team has been at work for several years, often editing and re-editing previous editions, including this module. As with many multi-authored works, the project offers a diverse range of insights and methods that overlay each other with common themes and concerns.

The table of contents for this study follows this order.

Introduction

Lesson 1: Introducing Children's Ministry

Lesson 2: Children in Scripture

Lesson 3: The Child in History and Contemporary Culture

Lesson 4: Understanding the Development of Children

Lesson 5: How Children Learn

Lesson 6: Global Diversity and Ministry in the Church

Lesson 7: The Spirituality of Children

Lesson 8: Spiritual Formation

Lesson 9: Pastoral Care

Lesson 10: Relational Leadership

Lesson 11: Programming for Children's Ministries

Lesson 12: Developing a Strategic Plan, Calendar, and Ministries Budget

Lesson 13: The Church: A Safe Environment

Lesson 14: Evaluating Curriculum, Events, and Ministry Programs

Lesson 15: Storytelling, Spiritual Formation, and Biblical Interpretation

Lesson 16: Discipline and Classroom Management
Lesson 17: Evangelizing and Discipling Children
Lesson 18: Leading Children in Worship
Lesson 19: Children in Ministry
Lesson 20: Ready to Minister

Finally, we offer a general reading list for the reader. All such lists become dated over time; however, these books are representative of the texts that informed the creation of these lessons. While some books are cited at key junctures in the writings, many texts, along with current research in child development and child education, often stand “behind” the writing of these lessons. We hope you will find these writings engaging and thought-provoking as supplemental resources for your study.

Academic Background Resources on Children’s Learning, Spirituality, and Theology

Bunge, Marcia J., Ed. (2001). *The Child in Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Bunge, Marcia J., Ed. (2008). *The Child in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Brennan, Patrick McKinley, Ed. (2008). *The Vocation of the Child*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Coles, Robert (1990). *The Spiritual Life of Children*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Herzog, Kristin (2005). *Children and Our Global Future*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.

Kolb, David (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Publishers, 1984

Lawson, Kevin, Ed. (2012). *Children’s Spirituality: New Perspectives*. Eugene: OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

Mercer, Joyce (2005). *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*. Atlanta: Chalice Press.

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie. (2003). *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Pamela King, Linda Wagener, and Peter Benson, Eds. (2005). *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers.

Stonehouse, Catherine (1998). *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Stonehouse, Catherine and Scottie May (2010). *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Yust, Karen-Marie (2001). *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Westerhoff, John H. (1976/2000). *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Revised Edition. Toronto: Morehouse Publishing.

Zuck, Roy (1996). *Precious in His Sight: Childhood and Children in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Practical General Resources for Children's Ministry

- Alley, Steve (2002). *Growing a Healthy Children's Ministry*. Cincinnati, OH: Standard.
- Beckwith, Ivy (2010). *Formational Children's Ministry*. Grand Rapids, Baker Books.
- Blevins, Dean G. and Mark A. Maddix (2010). *Discovering Discipleship: The Dynamics of Christian Education*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City.
- Capehart, Jody (2005). *Teaching With Heart*. Cincinnati, OH: Standard.
- Chapman, Kathleen (2003). *Teaching Kids Authentic Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Fowler, Larry (2004). *Rock Solid Kids*. Ventura, CA: Gospel Light.
- James, Steven (2002). *The Creative Storytelling Guide for Children's Ministry*. Cincinnati, OH: Standard.
- Jutila, Craig, et al. (2006). *Children's Ministry in the 21st Century*. Loveland, CO: Group.
- Keifer, Mikel, Ed. (2002). *Children's Ministry that Works (Revised and Updated)*. Loveland, CO: Group.
- LeFever, Marlene (1995). *Learning Styles: Reaching Everyone God gave you to Teach*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Publishers.
- May, Scottie, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell (2005). *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- McCarthy, Bernice (1980). *The 4Mat System*. Excel.
- Miller, Sue and David Staal (2004). *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kidd's Week*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Perkins, Hal (2006). *If Jesus were a Parent*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City.