

Foundations for God-Centered Ministry, Part 1

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A Vision for God-Centered Worship in the Next Generation

Vision-Driven Ministry

More often than not, children's ministry in the church grows out of a vision for _____, not a radical, well-articulated vision for children.

Activity-orientation emphasizes _____ we are _____. There is no specific understanding of the _____ or the _____ or an event. It can be summed up in the word "_____."

Vision-orientation emphasizes _____ we are _____.

It recognizes that programs are important but should be shaped by a plan for:

- ❖ Imparting the _____
- ❖ Presenting the _____
- ❖ Nurturing the _____ of the next generation

Psalm 127:3-5—Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. ⁴Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. ⁵Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!

Children ought to be _____.

Psalm 78

Psalm 78:1-3—Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! ²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ³things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.

1. The psalmist has been _____ with a _____.
2. There is a _____ on his life and ours to pass that _____ on to the next generations.

They got that vision from the people who came _____ them.

Psalm 78:4-7—We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. ⁵He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments...

Every child of God has this _____ on his life. This is your _____.

Three Biblical Foundations for Children's Ministry

Foundation 1: The _____ of God

Psalm 78:4, Psalm 145:4-7, Isaiah 43:20-21, Psalm 102:15-18

Everything God has _____ and all that He is _____ and all that He ever will _____—all of His _____ before all time and forever are for His _____.

It is, therefore, crucial that we keep God's zeal for His glory in mind when we teach the _____ to children.

The Bible

- ❖ The Bible is first and foremost a book about _____.
- ❖ _____ is the main _____ of the Bible.
- ❖ If we want children to see God as _____, we must give them a _____-centered understanding of the _____.

Esther: _____

Noah: _____

Elijah: _____

David: _____

Our vision is for a generation that can read their _____ with _____-centered eyes to the _____ of His _____.

The Bible is not merely a book of _____ lessons. It does show us how to live godly lives, but to reduce Bible stories to that is to _____ the _____ and _____ of God.

The aim of the Bible is to draw our attention to _____, to _____ Him as we _____ His character, which leads us to emulate _____ and to walk in His _____.

God-Centered Orientation to All of Life

Romans 11:36, Isaiah 40:21-22, Isaiah 40:25-26, Colossians 1:15-17

The whole _____ exists for the _____ of God. God does not _____ for us; we _____ to _____ Him. But we live in a self-centered universe that is all about _____. This is the _____ into which every child is born. We must _____ these destructive distortions of the _____.

(Psalm 89:5-7, Psalm 99:2-3, Colossians 1:15-18)

Teaching the Bible with misplaced _____ distorts the _____ and conceals the _____.

- ❖ “God loves ME” vs. _____
- ❖ “God cares for ME” vs. _____
- ❖ “God provides for ME” vs. _____
- ❖ “God hears ME when I pray” vs. _____

Foundation 2: The _____ of God

Psalm 78:5—He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children...

God has a _____ that He wants to be known, and He has a _____ that He wants passed on to the generations, His righteous _____ as well as the _____ of His character.

Foundation 3: The _____ of Jesus Christ

Psalm 78:7—...so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments...

Our hope in God is founded on God’s _____ through the _____ of His Son on the _____. The goal of our intentional teaching of the foundations is to _____ children to recognize their _____ state and to respond in _____ and _____ to God.

We must remember that our children are spiritually _____. We must be mindful that:

- ❖ _____ is real and glorious.
- ❖ _____ is real and dreadful.
- ❖ The eternal _____ of our children is at stake.
- ❖ The _____ is precious.

John 6:44a—No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...

It is not the _____ but the _____ that saves.

The Facts of the Gospel

- ❖ What is the _____? Why do I need _____?
- ❖ What did _____ do through _____ to solve the problem?
- ❖ How do I _____ from what _____ did?
- ❖ How did _____ bring me to the point where I was _____ to obtain this benefit?

Psalm 78:6-8—...that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; ⁸and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Romans 10:17—So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Conclusion: What Is Our Vision?

Discussion Questions

1. What is the goal and motivation for our children's ministry program? Does this need to change? How so? Take some time as a group to list specific goals for the children and families in your church.
2. What is the target your children's ministry is aiming at? Take some time to articulate this as a group. To direct your thinking, review the following questions that point to the desired outcomes of your ministry:
 - *How can we raise a generation of men and women who have a biblical understanding of God?*
 - *What will we do to help them understand the Gospel and be able to apply it and live it out in their lives?*
 - *What steps will we take to encourage children to grow in faith as well as in their knowledge of the Scriptures?*
 - *What verses or portions of the Bible do we want these children to be able to quote from memory in 20 years?*
 - *How would we want them responding when tragedy strikes or when they face suffering in their lives?*
 - *What steps can we take to make sure they are meaningfully engaged in the church and not pew sitters 20 years from now?*
 - *What components of our ministry best fit our goals? What activities are less productive and perhaps wasting precious time and resources?*
 - *How can we give them a vision for outreach—missions and evangelism?*
3. Spend some time studying Psalm 78, especially verses 1-7. How does this passage further clarify your vision?
4. List some specific practical ideas of how you can show children the glory of God in your classrooms. If time allows, work on a familiar Bible narrative as a group and tell it from a God-centered perspective.
5. What does your current ministry say about your concern for children's souls? Are your intentions clear? Do your classroom practices consistent with your stated intentions? Take some time as a group to discuss where your ministry program succeeds in being God-centered and Gospel-proclaiming. Where can you improve?