

Kids' Ministry Training Video 1: Holistic Faith

Programming

Sometimes we reduce programming down to planning an hour of children's activities for Sunday morning – but programming is about so much more! Programming involves developing a bigger, broader plan for how children are disciplined within and outside of your church.

Here2Stay

Here2Stay is Australian based initiative which has identified two key contexts, and eight “pillars” or keys which are evident in children and young people who continue in their faith as adults.

The two key contexts of spiritual nurture are:

- ❑ **Family/Household Nurture.** Families are the primary faith communities for all ages, especially for children in their formative years. Strengthening families to provide nurturing home environments that include spiritual formation is key.
- ❑ **Generational Connections.** Discipleship is about being intentional, relational and holistic in creating a culture of lifelong formation across the age groups. The church is one of the few places where all generations are present. We are called to live as the family of God together.

And then 8 factors which make a difference to lifelong faith

The Head and the Heart

- ❑ **Big Story of the Bible.** Help children discover that the Bible is one big story. It's important that we don't just know the story of God, his creation and his relationship with humanity, but understand our place and how we fit in to that story.
- ❑ **Encounters with Jesus.** Create space for all ages to hear from God and encounter him together. We tell children that God is always there but do they seem him at work, or experience his Spirit in us? Allowing time for reflection and wondering is an important aspect of programming.

Faith in action

- ❑ **Serve in Mission.** Encourage all ages to be involved in mission & encourage families to serve together. Children and teenagers are carrying all kinds of responsibilities at school and in their part time jobs, yet at church we sometimes wait until they are adults to invite them to be co-labourers for the gospel.
- ❑ **Respond with Compassion.** Assist children to respond with the heart, eyes and hands of Jesus. Model compassion, and help children to understand that each person has a story. What might seem weird or different or even frustrating requires compassion and understanding, both locally and globally.

MODULE ONE: GETTING STARTED

Companions for the Journey

- ❑ **Positive Peer Community.** Facilitate opportunities for children to make close, positive friendships. Peers don't necessarily need to be the same age – peer groups may form around interests instead. Even with no friends their same age, young people can be content because they feel they belong.
- ❑ **Mentors & Life Coaches.** Provide caring people who can offer time to journey with children. Mentoring doesn't always have to be one on one, it can take place in groups. It may be general or around a particular aspect of life or ministry.

Markers on the road

- ❑ **Peak Experiences.** Create mountain top, memory making moments where children can encounter God. Peak experiences often happen through a camp, retreat or special event, where there is an extended time to connect in community, and situations where God is experienced or seen at work.
- ❑ **anchors/Rites of Passage.** Anticipate, honour and celebrate key moments & transitions for children. Rites of passage are markers along the journey of life that we look back on as key points in our journey into maturity. Baptism, starting school or graduation into youth group can all be key anchors.

As you program for your children's ministry, don't be tempted to only think about a story, craft and song! While it's tempting to start with the detail, step back and think about the discipleship of kids in your church. Where would you like them to be in five, ten or twenty years' time? How will you get there?

Remember, you don't need to implement all of these pillars at once! Start by choosing just one or two to develop in your church, and brainstorm a practical way you can do so.

You can check out more about this research at here2stay.org.au or check out our Facebook page for ideas and stories.

Further Reading

www.here2stay.org.au (Australian)

Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus David M. Csinos & Ivy Beckwith, (US)

Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century John Roberto (US)

Faithfull Generation: 10 foundations for lifelong faith formation with children in families, churches and communities Children Matter (A UK adaptation of the Here 2 Stay resources)

Questions for Your Team

- In what ways are we equipping parents to be the primary nurturers of their children's faith?
- What opportunities are given in our church for different generations to connect?
- What is one area of those outlined above that is strong in our ministry with families and children?
- What is one area we could focus on strengthening, and how will we practically do this?
- Is there another ministry team in our church we could work with to see this take shape?