

Five Big Questions

TO ASK ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



Whether you're forming a new children's ministry or reevaluating existing programming, it's important to ask the right questions. This resource shares five important questions that will help you define your main purpose and goals. Asking these questions will help you develop a solid framework for your children's ministry, where all children truly belong as they learn to know and love God.

AS YOU WORK THROUGH THESE QUESTIONS, PLEASE NOTE THAT FAITH FORMATION MINISTRIES HAS A CHILDRENS' MINISTRY CATALYZER AVAILABLE TO HELP YOUR CHURCH ADDRESS ISSUES THAT MAY ARISE. EMAIL US AT CHILDRENSMINISTRY@CRCNA.ORG.

#1 WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF OUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

This first question helps you lay a strong foundation for your ministry. It gets at the "big picture" that describes what your church and ministry are about.

ASK:

- What is the **purpose** of our ministry with children? Is it to impart biblical knowledge, to help children meet God, to provide a Christian community where children know they belong? Why do we do what we do?
- What do we understand as the **biblical mandate** for ministry with children? Why are children important to God?
- What is our **big-picture goal** for ministry with children?

#2 WHAT IS OUR CHURCH'S MINISTRY CONTEXT?

Each church is unique, and this question helps to identify what is particular to your context and setting. Take into account the place, people, theology, and style of your church.

ASK:

- What are the **characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses** of our church?
- Where has God **placed** us? What is our "sphere of influence"?
- What **resources** do we have (budget, time, volunteers, materials)? What special **gifts and abilities** do the people in our congregation have?

#3 WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO NURTURE IN CHILDREN?

Ministry goals should grow out of your ultimate purpose and be defined by your context. What qualities would you like to produce in children?

ASK:

- How will our children's ministry help a child to **grow in faith**?
- What are the **spiritual needs** of the children in our church and/or our community? How can we best identify and meet those needs?
- Which specific **spiritual disciplines** would we like to cultivate, such as prayer, Bible study, or service? How can we incorporate them into our children's ministry?

#5 HOW CAN WE FORMULATE A PLAN TO EXECUTE OUR VISION WELL?

This last question addresses what you actually will do with children. This is about the actual practices in your ministry.

ASK:

- What **experiences** should our children have in order to reach the goals we have identified?
- **Who is best suited to lead this planning?** Who should be at the table? Whose voices need to be heard?
- Is there a **curriculum** that can help us achieve these goals? A specific program we want to try? Or does our programming need to be reworked to accomplish what we actually want to achieve with children?

#4 WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO FORM A CHILD'S FAITH?

What are the strategies we think are best in helping to shape a child's faith? Is there a better way to help children learn?

ASK:

- **How do children learn best?** Through direct instruction, through hands-on experience, through story? What are all the ways in which children are learning within our congregation?
- In what ways does **culture** affect how children learn? How much do we know about the culture (ethnic, socioeconomic, etc.) of the children in our neighborhood? If we have some learning to do, how might we fill in our knowledge gaps?
- How can we provide **radical hospitality** to children? How will we communicate to all children that they belong here?

QUESTIONS? WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

These questions are adapted from the Frankena model outlined in *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community* by Scottie May, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell. If you would like a partner to help you think through the questions above, or if you want to brainstorm a new ministry idea, contact our Children's Ministry Catalyzer at childrensministry@crcna.org.

The Children's Ministry Catalyzer is available to coach and consult with CRC churches free of charge as part of the services Faith Formation Ministries provides through CRC Ministry Shares.

Faith Formation Ministries encourages and equips local CRC ministry leaders in their calling to shape intentional, lifelong faith formation in their context. Our Regional Catalyzers are available to consult with CRC congregations on any faith formation matter. For more information, visit us at crcna.org/FaithFormation.

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