

# How to get parents to help out in Children's Ministries

## Put down the Pen & LEAD with Families in Mind I Part B of B



No longer is "Children's Ministries." just ministry to children, but includes ministry to parents. They are an integral part of the child's life. After all, it is their child. Let's look at the type of families more than likely you will have at your church: (the table below is not an attempt to categorize all families—it is a general observer's view of typical church families. Every church and community is different. (Below are family observations from years of working with families.)

Ministry Family	Financially strapped family	Single Parent Family	Blended Families
Parents & kids are active in ministry-as either leaders, teachers or participants--they are involved.	Financially strapped families are those who are struggling to meet their basic needs.	Composed of one parent household.	Don't want to be noticed for being blended families. Want to feel like they belong.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel like they are always serving or in church</li> <li>• Want some down time from ministry</li> <li>• Want to be ministered to-- don't want to be the ones who are always serving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be stressed when activities and/or events require money for them to participate in</li> <li>• Sometimes go without some basic needs in order to fulfill what they consider is more important— God's program</li> <li>• Want to participate without having to pay anything</li> <li>• Are usually willing to volunteer as a form of payment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel financially burdened</li> <li>• Children going through emotional changes because one parents is there seldom or not at all</li> <li>• The children have visitation days with the other parent and child misses church. Usually parents feel somewhat disconnected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel that they are standing out in a crowd because they are remarried or adopted families</li> <li>• May be embarrassed if they were previously divorced</li> </ul>

In all the scenarios above there are four tying factors:

**L** - 1) All are Christians who recognize their need for the **Lord** and are striving to serve Him

**E** - 2) All would like some relief-whether it is down time, help with finances, but mostly **encouragement** and support

**A** - 3) All are **active** whether in ministry or outside activities and cannot seem to fit one more thing into their schedule

**D** - 4) All **desire** to attend your church and have their children participate as well

The acronym above is **LEAD**. That's right families are looking for help when it comes to leading. They need to know there is guidance found in God's house for them and their families. Parents need people—leaders in church—who will say we will help lead you and your families in the ways of the **Lord**. Families are lambs and sheep following the under-shepherd to the Great Shepherd, Jesus.

We will **encourage** you when you feel you can go no further, we will support and **encourage** you as much as possible with having either classes to that teach parenting, money management, or just having a parent-night out event—where parents can have a safe place to leave their children for a couple of hours so that they can have a date, clean their house, or whatever. We will strive to ensure you feel accepted, welcomed and love at our church. We will work with you to accomplish the goals that you have to raise your family in God's way. We will listen to your concerns and make changes when necessary.

We will respect that you are an **active** family and not overburden you with more programs, which you must attend. We will respect that you are an **active** family and need to have your children participate in activities out of the church—such as school events, plays, sports, etc.

We must lead these families with children who **desire** to attend our churches by providing not only programs, but opportunities where they can use their gifts and talents for God's kingdom.

Are you prepared to lead with families in mind? I knew you would say yes. Let's get going!

Leading and Planning with Families in Mind takes a team: (Hey, did you notice that nothing is done alone! You need your staff, parents and kids!) Remember the surveys—good place to start. Do the activities parents and kids desire fit into the criteria of your mission statement? If so, get it going. Here are some that are very general and can definitely complement any almost any church's vision/goals.

#### **Family Idea #1:** Family Retreat—Just kids and their parents

Plan a one or two day getaway for families. Rent a facility nearby with a large conference room or chapel and field.

Remember there is expense involved in renting—charge families a nominal fee to attend—families that can drive to the place should carpool with those families that cannot—this takes lots of planning. Make sure everyone has insurance and has signed travel/trip waivers. Safety is utmost important. Families that cannot afford to go, should be given the option of paying on installments, pay a portion and serve at the retreat to pay off the rest, or should be given a "benevolence" as your budget allows.

(Another suggestion is a one-day getaway for the Ministry Families only—this is their time to get away, be refreshed, connect and be served.)

#### **Family Idea #2:** Support Group for Parents of Kids with Special needs

Parents of special needs children usually feel isolated in the church when it comes to their child's spiritual life. A lot of Christian programs do not have a ministry that serves families with special needs. They feel alone, hurt, rejected—and some go through such turmoil trying to understand why a loving God would allow them to have a child that does not "fit" in with the other kids.

This is an awesome opportunity to minister to hurting families, provide a network of support for the parents, and in this case, a way to get them involved in ministry. Getting parents on board with what is near to their heart is a sure win!

#### **Family Idea #3:** Parenting Classes for parents of newborns.

I remember when I had my first child, a little baby girl. How precious she was. My first question to God was "Now what do I do with her?" I know that sounds so silly—take her home, love and nurture her. Right? Well, yes, but some new parents feel overwhelmed and underequipped for the task. This was a brand new life the Lord had entrusted to me. It seemed so easy when she was in my womb. When I ate, she ate, When I slept, well I hope she was sleeping. Well, now she was out of the womb and in the real world.

Create a safe place where moms and dads can ask any questions and feel comfortable. Touch on everything from baby physical development and milestones to how to take care of the baby. This can also serve as a way of transitioning these families into joining the nursery ministry.

#### **Family Idea #4: Be a Pillar!!**

What does that mean? Well, (again this is not an exhausted list) what I mean is that you should remain constant in your church. Things in our world change constantly—our economy, our health system, and our safety concerns. It is an ever changing world, but one thing remains or should remain and that is a constant God—one who never changes, whose love is eternal. As a Children’s Ministry, remember that one of the things you represent to families that may be going through their own personal changes (unemployment, sickness, divorce, etc.) is that you will be there for them. A pillar in the community—a place they can count on in times of crisis. Families need to know that you will be there to assist them—whether they attend on a consistent basis or not.

This is an excellent way to involve families—create a safe haven where families can come to discuss their crisis—have classes on how parents can deal with divorce and how they can help their children, have classes for parents that can help them draw up a resume and job interviewing tips. Not only are you giving to these families, I am confident that this family will assist you the next time you need help in setting up or breaking down.

Give and it shall be given back to you! Every family idea above is the church ministry giving to the families-through planning with them in mind. Remember, every church has its own needs and family situations. Whether it is a family in the city or in a rural environment, there is something all families have in common, and that is the need to feel needed, valued, and accepted as part of their home church. The reason you are reading this is because you have something in common with many children’s leaders—how can I get parents to help in Ministry.

My encouragement to you is to never give up! There is nothing better than steadfastness, commitment, and love in all you do. It will shine through. Surround yourself with your staff, pour into them and they will pour into you and support you as you LEAD. Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. Ecclesiastes 11:1. There are families in need, and you are there to help them, and in return they will help you. Never give up. The best thing you can do is to LEAD!!

So, LEAD, LEAD, and LEAD!

- Lead them to the Lord—times of salvation, relationship building, and refreshing before our Great Shepherd
- Lead them to the answer—through encouraging workshops and classes
- Lead them to be better families—By not overbooking your programs, allowing families to spend time together—sometimes less is more!
- And Lead them by being an example; showing families how you place your family in ministry speaks volume. Spend time with your own kids and make sure that nothing interferes with that time—this is a great lesson for other families who are balancing careers, family time, church activities and other social activities.