

CHILDREN IN YOUR KOINONIA



God loves the children and He wants them in His kingdom. God also has a plan for them and leads them into mature Christian life, but He sets out clear commandments about the way we should teach them to grow spiritually. His plan has two strands:

Children Should Grow within a Family.

Children are born into a family environment where they are loved and taught by their parents. It is in this normal context of home life that they are nurtured, not in a school situation. Outside his immediate family is the

child's extended family of grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and even family friends. Then there is the family of God – brothers and sisters in Christ so that every child has a spiritual family beyond his natural one. This spiritual family supports and encourages the natural family in leading their children in the ways of God.

Children Should Live a Full Christian Life.

Nowhere does the Bible suggest that children have a second-class level of Christian life. If children have genuinely been born again they should be able to pray effectively, to worship, and to receive the Holy Spirit and His gracious gifts. They should be equipped for the spiritual attacks, which surrounds them. They should be able to win other children to the Lord. They should have the heart to serve and be role models of their peers. In other words, God promises are for the children back from what God wants to do in their lives. More often the barriers is not their immaturity but our own lack of faith in them. Most mothers hesitate about bringing their little ones. They are afraid that the babies will interrupt the meeting. If your koinonia will want to nurture people, you will have to have children's ministry or what I call it **Kids-Koino** for their time of learning. Children are part of the koinonia. They are different ways they can join your koinonia. Do not leave them in a room with nothing to learn and do. Here are some suggestions on how your Kids-Koino might be effective:

- Babies and toddlers will respond in different ways. You can plan for babies to sleep through the koinonia meeting.
- Many toddlers like to be in the action and they find it hard to sit still. Allow them to join the praise and worship and the icebreakers.
- If there is an older child in the meeting he or she may wish to stay with the adult. However, if you give older children some responsibility and make them leaders of the younger children, they usually join happily.

Child-Servant Leaders

The Kids-Koino is usually led by one of the koinonia member, who takes turns to be with the children. In this way, the children get to know several of the adults and have quality time at their supervision. Not every member of the koinonia will feel able to lead the children. That does not mean they should keep aloof. Sometimes they can visit the children and let children talk to them. They may talk to the children or play with them at a social event or prayer helps get to know them in a more personal way.

Remember that children are not visitors of your koinonia or less important members. When something is being planned, their needs should be considered too.

Spiritual Growth

When children discover they are respected in a koinonia, participation becomes natural. A child as young as four can lay his or her hands on a person who is sick. They learn worship and even to lead the adult in worship. Then they can tell you about their own prayer needs and pray for the needs of others. They can begin to hear the word of the Lord and to share it with others. They may even use a prayer language. In a koinonia it is safe for the children to ask their awkward questions. If the parents do not have the answer, someone else in the group help them know about it. As children begin to follow Jesus they will probably want to remember His love in the Lord's Supper. In the family context of the koinonia, the members will know the child's faith and will be able to help him or her understand when the right times comes.

Suggested Program

Children and Adults Together

- Welcome and Icebreaker
- Worship and praise
- Praise Report
- Family Time
- Prayer (include children)
- Special event or fellowship (usually comes at the end)

Children's Program

- Edification: Talking about Sunday message in Sunday school
- Review Scripture memory verse
- Support Activity
- Share the Vision
- Praying for unbelieving friends and family
- Planning services to others

Discipline

If occasionally the children behave badly, their parents have the first responsibility to correct them. If the parents ignore the behavior, the servant leader would tactfully remind the Koinonia Agreement. Problem often arises when the food is served, because children often want to be served first. Children need to be taught how to eat food politely in public and in someone else's home. If the parents are absent when the children break the rules, any koinonia member can check them gently, but they should not punish them. During the Kid's Slot, the leader roistered has authority to control the children. The best control comes through love and respect.

Pastoring the Children

Children can be so cute and bouncy or quiet or noisy, that we forget they also have pastoral need. Often the children do not know that they can share their problems with someone who can help them. Sometimes children do not understand their parent's actions and they feel unloved. Remember that in the family relationships the children often blame themselves for being in the wrong. The Koinonia is a place where children come under the covering of a small community. Other Christian adult will be interacting with the children in the koinonia meetings. Sometimes observers can see more than parents who live too close to the situation. The koinonia members can minister to the children through prayers. When children are brave enough to share a problem with the fellow koinonia members, or at the Kid's Slot, they need to know that the group believes that God can do something about it.

They may be helped through Bible verse or a word from the Lord directed especially to them. When the koinonia prays for a child, he/she feels a sense of belonging to a group who cares.

The Children's Helpers

Children are not monsters! At least not unless we let them become one. They are people trying hard to be accepted and love, trying to do the right thing and not appear foolish, looking for friendship and approval – in fact, deep down they are a lot like you and me. The only difference is that they tend to show their feelings more. When it is your turn to be on the Kid's Slot, start praying for the children during the preceding week. It's good if you know their names from the beginning. You need to know their names to establish good control. They don't respond to "Hey. You!" Find out from the previous week's helper how things went. Were there things that needed follow-up? The previous leader should have written these things in a notebook; it will help you monitor their achievements and straggles then make improvement if needed. Remember your basic goal is to help the children practice and experience a full Christian life. There are three basic goals you need to do:

- Encourage them in prayer***
- Encourage them in the life of the Spirit***
- Encourage them in reaching out to their friends***

Weekly Duties:

- Trust in God's power, not your own. Pray for the children.
- Check whether there is anything you need to follow up from the previous week. Use your notebook or journal.
- Ask the children to help you.
- Know the material and choose what you use. Seek advice from the church's Christian Education Coordinator.
- Listen with your heart to discern the children's underlying needs.
- Allow the children to exercise the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them. Do not let the others feel inferior
- Deal with troublesome children with spiritual insights. Help them to obey you because they love you.
- Plan the ending. You could hold hands and say a prayer of blessing.
- Help them to make surprises to bless the adults
- Let them see the reality of your own faith and life.