

STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO STARTING CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IN SMALL GROUPS

Here are some considerations to bear in mind when starting a children's programme in your small group:

- (i) **Age(s) of the children.** Younger children (ages 3-6) tend to enjoy storytelling and craft activities while children in primary school (ages 7-12) tend to enjoy discussions and interacting with their peers. If the number of children in the group is large enough, you may wish to consider segmenting the children according to their age groups e.g. nursery and kindergarten going children, and primary children. For children aged 2 and below, there is no need to specially plan a curriculum for them. More importantly, they should use the time to get to know the children of other small group members in their age group so as to build familiarity among themselves through play so that they can integrate smoothly into the nursery programme once they are ready.
- (ii) **Number of parent volunteers.** When deciding how many groups to divide the children into, bear in mind that more volunteers conducting children's sessions means a lower attendance at the adult session. To begin, ask parents in the small group to volunteer. The first few volunteers should preferably be those who enjoy teaching and interacting with children. The first few lessons are very important as a positive experience for the child would mean that the child is more likely to look forward to attending small group. After the children have gotten used to the routine, you may wish to rotate the teaching among more adult members of the small group to ensure that everyone gets a chance to attend adult fellowship and not be always running the children's sessions. If there are adults who are not confident of handling kids initially, it is helpful to pair them up with those who have experience at first. If foreign domestic helpers are available, enlist their help in terms of bringing the children to the toilet, sharpening the colour pencils etc. so that the teacher can concentrate on his/her task of teaching.
- (iii) **Plan the curriculum.** Form a sub-committee comprising 2-3 adult small group members to work out what the focus/theme for the year should be based on your understanding of the children's needs and interests. For example, for the primary children, you may choose to focus on character building. For each of the values/traits, a general guide should be drawn up listing the key message(s), stories/examples to illustrate and the memory bible verse. Adults delivering the sessions can be given some flexibility to adapt the curriculum further based on their talents and resources available. Review the curriculum every year to see how it could be further improved so that the children do not get bored with hearing the same things over and over again. Also remember to set aside time for the children to have a snack and to catch up with each other. See **Annex** for (a) Draft Curriculum Planning Template, (b) a list of possible reference materials) and (c) Suggested lesson plan when conducting the session.

- (iv) **Worship.** If there is more than one group of children, try to hold some combined worship sessions to allow them to interact with children who are older or younger than themselves. It will be beneficial to the younger children as they see how the older children worship. The older children will benefit from being good role models for the younger children. As a fun alternative, occasionally worship can be combined with the adults, and a few songs chosen for the kids and/or the adults songs explained to them. This helps build a sense of family worship and reinforces the togetherness as a household of God.
- (v) **Physical Environment.** As a general rule of thumb, the more children, the more space required. If you intend to separate the younger children from the older ones, it is preferable that the sessions be held in two separate locations that are near each other to facilitate parents moving back and forth. Also, ensure that there are toilets nearby for the children who may require to use the toilet urgently at the last minute or to wash their hands before snack time. Wherever possible, ensure that the room is child-safe e.g. remove breakable and sharp objects etc.
- (vi) **Potential challenges.**
- Disruptive or distracted kids. Have a stock of simple/cheap but good toys/stationary or snacks handy as incentives. E.g. small balls, individually wrapped biscuits.
 - Disagreement on the issues/topics/interpretations taught to the kids. The adults have to be in agreement from the beginning that ultimately each child is the responsibility of his/her parents, and if there is anything that the parents disagree with, it is their responsibility to convey/explain their views separately to their child. However, a preview on the material can also be given to all the adults in the group at the beginning and any issues discussed and resolved to minimise potential disagreements later on.

Most importantly, remember that this is not school. It is important to remain focused on prayer, to affirm the child's identity as a child of God and to continue to build relationships among the children so that they feel loved and accepted for who they are.

*This starter kit is developed by:
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ANNEX

(a) Draft Curriculum Planning Template

DATE	TOPIC	KEY MESSAGE	MEMORY VERSE	LESSON/STORY	TEACHER

(b) Possible Reference Materials

- **Books:**
 - What does the Bible say about that? (Author: Carolyn Larsen; Publisher: Crossway)
 - On the Way Series (Publisher: TnT Ministries)
 - The Big Book of Bible Puzzles (Authors: Colleen Kennelly; Publisher: Gospel Light)
 - Little Kids Time My God and Me (Publisher: Gospel Light)
- **Devotionals:**
 - Sticky Situations: 365 Devotions for Kids and Families (Publisher: Tyndale Kids)
 - Sticky Situations: 2 - 365 Devotions for Elementary Kids (Publisher: Tyndale Kids)
 - The One Year Devotions for Kids (Publisher: Tyndale Kids)
- **Internet Sites:**
 - www.kidssundayschool.com
 - www.dltk-bible.com

(c) Lesson Plan

DATE: XX

TIME	DESCRIPTION	I/C
8.00 - 8.20pm	Opening Prayer Worship	Peter
8.20 - 9.00 pm	Bible Lesson Craft/Discussion Closing Prayer	Mary
9.00 - 9:20pm	Snack & Toilet Break	Peter/Mary
9.20 - 9:50pm	Games	Peter
9:50 - 10:00pm	Pack up	Peter/Mary