



The KIDS MINISTRY Toolbox



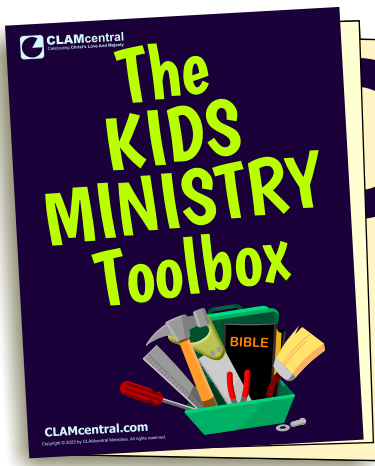
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I didn't know what I was getting into...

But follow me as I guide you through the wilds of
Sunday School and Children's Ministry.
It's a grand adventure in faith and reward. It's **AWESOME!**

I'm Tom Finley, courageous survivor of 25 years in
Children's Ministry, author of books for kids and their
leaders, and much m...well, actually that's pretty much it.





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**Discover the Children's Ministry
and Sunday School HERO God made
YOU to be!** (You know...kinda like Gideon.)

Do you know the key 'do or die' aspects of kids ministry? Welcome to the Kids Ministry Toolbox, a box full of wisdom to correctly handle everything from vision casting to overcoming a cheesy budget, original Bible learning activities, dumb moves to avoid and much more. Build your ministry competently as you become expert at the things all children's workers wish they knew when they started.

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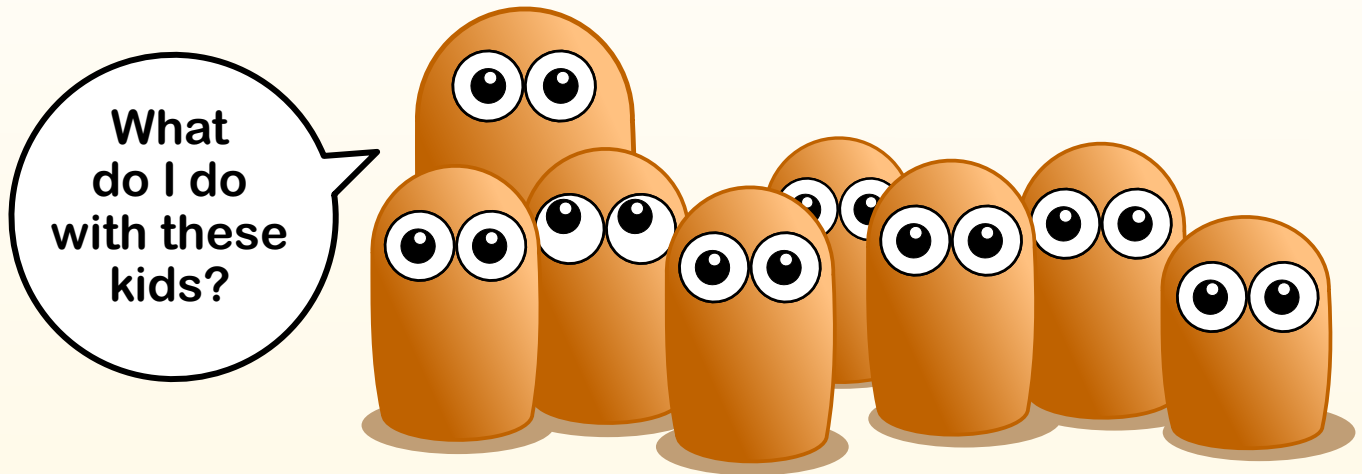
Christ's Love And Majesty
Ministries (CLAMcentral)

Tom Finley - Publisher

An online, ever-expanding
source of tips, ideas and
downloadable tools for those
who serve God by working
with kids.

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So, First Question...



This is equivalent to asking,
"What is the ultimate point or purpose of our Children's Ministry?"

Answer: Disciple Them.

Pop Quiz: What's wrong with this sentence...

"My Vision is to Disciple Kids!"

It's not YOUR vision, it's the LORDS!

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20, *NIV*.

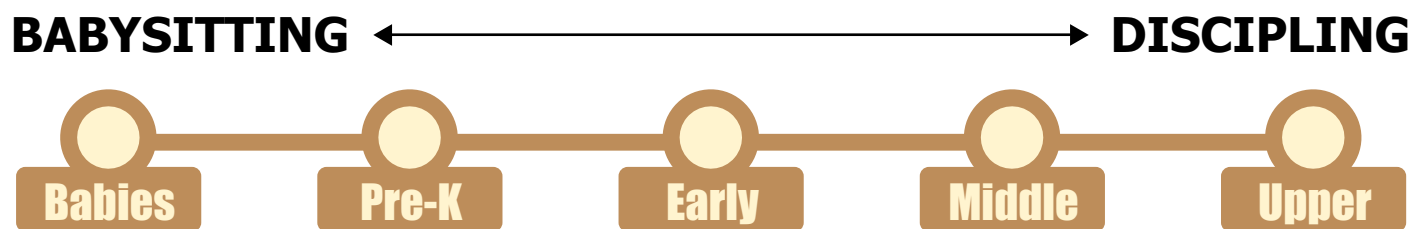
Discipleship not OUR vision, it's the LORDS! He's pretty clear on that :)

THE ULTIMATE GOAL of successful Children's Ministry is to lead kids to Christ, disciple them, baptize them and teach them to follow and obey the Lord. **FOR A LIFETIME.**

With that in mind, I have a question for you to consider...

When does discipling begin?

Look at the chart below. In your opinion, at what age does babysitting turn from full time care to merely keeping an eye on the class? What about discipling—at what age do you think you should start?



Here at Toolbox HQ we maintain that discipleship starts the moment someone first lands in your ministry. Yep, even newborns. Discipleship ramps up as the years go by, certainly, but showing love to a baby—playing together with a toy, humming a song, rocking in a chair—these tell the tiny ones that they are in a good place with good people; a great step that begins the lifelong process of discipleship.



So if I'm a good babysitter in the nursery, that means I'm helping to fulfill the Great Commission?

Yep, that's what it means!
Thank you for your important service to God.

So What Do We Do??

Years ago, once I realized that **kids' ministry is all about creating lifelong followers of Jesus Christ**, I had to ask myself, "Sounds good... but what do I do?"

I followed

Our Lord's Treasure Map to **DISCIPLESHIP:** The Lord's Prayer!

The Lord's Prayer is like a **map to a treasure**. Jesus folded **seven key steps** (highlighted below) into His famous prayer, steps that—if followed—lead to an excellent life with God here on earth and for all eternity.

“ **OUR FATHER** in heaven,
HALLOWED be your name.
Your **KINGDOM** come, your **WILL** be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our **DAILY BREAD**.
FORGIVE our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but **deliver us from EVIL**. ”

Matthew 6:9-13

Key Steps for living a great Christian life, from the **LORD'S PRAYER**

1

"Our Father in heaven"

God must be our FATHER.

We must be born into the Lord's family. If we do not belong to God, we aren't even on the map to heaven. So, first order of business: Become a Christian.

2

"Hallowed be your name"

God is awesome. We WORSHIP Him.

As we get to know God better, we have a **growing awe and respect** for who He actually is. Wow! We hallow His name: Honor, elevate, raise up, worship.

3

"Your kingdom come"

God is our King. We SERVE Him.

Kings are served by their subjects. Even little kids can be given simple tasks around the classroom. Let them know the things they do are loved by our King.

4

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

God is in charge. We OBEY Him.

God's will is found in the Bible. Learning God's wisdom and instructions in His word are key to spiritual growth and success.

5

"Give us today our daily bread"

God provides. We DEPEND on Him.

As we walk the road with Jesus we begin to understand that we must depend on Him rather than ourselves. The Lord takes care of us better than we can!

6

"Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us"

God loves us. We LOVE Him.

Christ showed His love by dying for our sins. We show our love for Him by keeping our relationship with Him healthy, the reason to confess and forgive.

7

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil"

God guides us. We WALK with Him.

No matter what happens to us on our travels through this world, those who stick with Jesus know that He will deliver us safe and secure in heaven!

Can Little Kids Can Be TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST?

I'm sure of it! Look at the Lord's Prayer below, which I maintain is a great definition of what is a true disciple. Do you see ANY concept of the seven that a little kid could NOT be taught or could not understand? Nope, everything in that prayer can be grasped by anyone pretty much Preschool and older.

1

Our Father in heaven,

God must be our FATHER.

2

hallowed by your name.

God is awesome. We HONOR Him.

3

Your Kingdom come,

God is our King. We SERVE Him.

4

your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God is in charge. We OBEY Him.

5

Give us this day our daily bread.

God provides. We DEPEND on Him.

6

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

God loves us. We LOVE Him.

7

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

God guides us. We WALK with Him.

This is why I felt confident in this vision from the very beginning.
It's teachable, therefore it's reachable.

The Stages of a Growing Disciple of Christ

1

God
is my
Father

2

I learn
how great
He is

3

I start to
serve
Him

4

I start
to obey
Him

5

I start to
depend
on Him

6

I love
Him

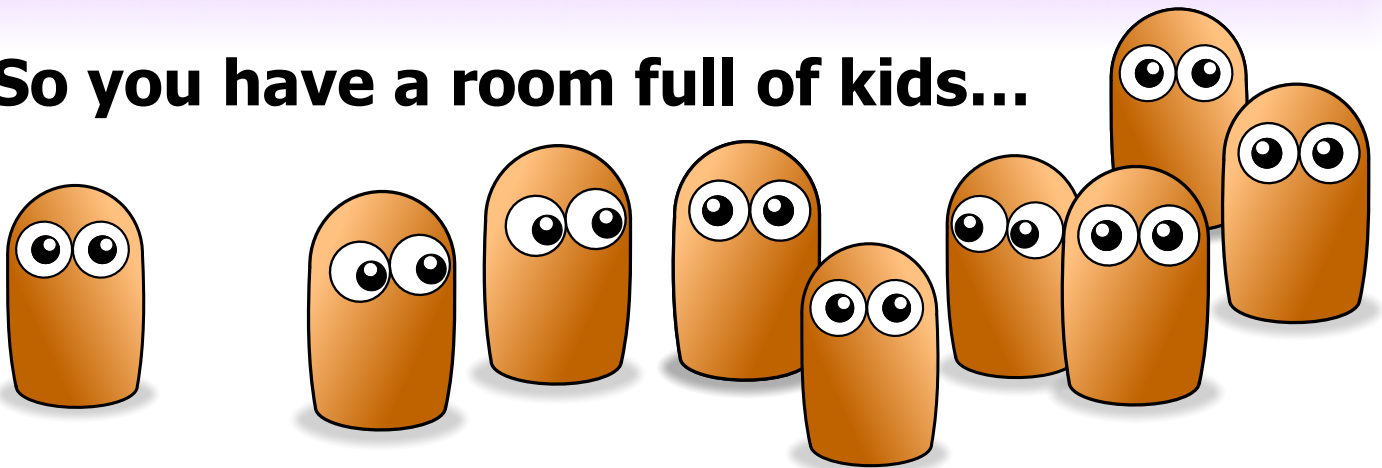
7

I walk
with Him
(all the way
to Heaven)



**Treasure!
Disciplined
Kids!**

So you have a room full of kids...



And that means you have an opportunity to do great in all seven steps found in the Lord's Prayer. And that goes double if you are in a position to handle things like VBS, after-school events and the like.

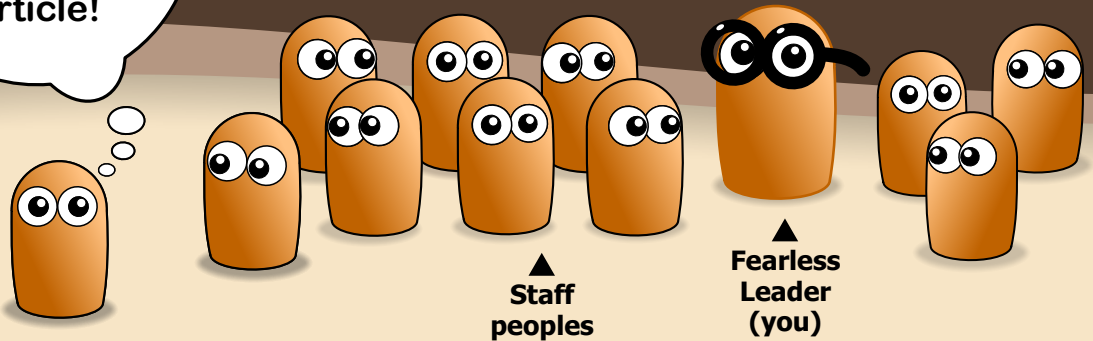
Here's the Good News...

Discipling kids is not hard to do. In fact, you really need just two things:

1. A Sunday School focused on Jesus and the things of the Lord's Prayer.
2. Longevity. True discipleship is a lifelong process. The more months and years you spend working with a child, the greater the results will be. And remember, these things count for **eternity!**

Build Your BASE (Impart Your Vision)

I sure
hope we learn
some practical
steps in this
article!



The Principles of Imparting Your Vision

- First, understand that when God gives you a vision for your ministry, **He will provide** the necessary people, money, energy and space to make that vision come true. This happened for Moses, David, Paul and many others in the Bible.
- Understand that **VISION** can be defined as our **ultimate goal**—in my case discipling as many kids as God gives. Our **MISSION**, on the other hand, is **what we do to reach that goal — the all-important system we employ**. That's the difference between a mission statement and a vision statement. Therefore...
- ...your staff will jump on board your vision when they understand that what you have them **doing** brings kids to a **lifelong, powerful relationship with the Savior**. This is the sort of motive that will pump a lot of energy into your group. An energized, excited group expands in size and effectiveness. Watch and see.
- Be sure the teaching tools, classroom environments and so forth support your vision. Put in the work to find curriculum that most nearly upholds your vision. More on that later.
- Tell everyone about the successes—the kid that prayed, the new friend brought, the child that got baptized. This is encouragement that fortifies your team.

To summarize, and some questions...

- God is the source of your vision; He will see it through. What are some things you've seen God do in your ministry?
- What is your ministry's vision? What are the wise things you are doing to reach your goal? Do you need to do more?
- Vision and Mission. Can you explain the difference between the two? Why is a clear understanding of mission so important to your volunteers?
- Do your teaching tools support your vision? If not, what needs to be done?
- We mentioned the successes in the lives of the kids you work with. Are there any heartbreaks you've experienced? If so, how have they shaped your thinking about your vision and mission.

**For every minute you talk about vision,
you'll spend an hour talking about mission.**

Persons with a vision take on a mission. That is, a target goal (the vision) is reached by doing things (the mission). You can communicate your vision in one or two sentences: "Our goal is to lead kids to a lifelong walk with Christ." The mission, on the other hand, must be laid out with every lesson and event: "For this Sunday's lesson you'll be doing this, this and this."

Thoughts about the people involved in your ministry: What to expect from them and what they should expect from you

- **The Leadership.** Pastors, elders—whatever you call the spiritual leaders.
- **Your Staff.** Teachers and their assistants, van drivers, camp cooks, special event workers, clean up crew, perhaps your spouse, and all that sort of stuffs.
- **The Parents.** And grandparents.
- **The Odd Duck.** The rare person that loves to donate financial support!

What you should expect from these people:

Church Leadership	Volunteer Staff	Parents	The Odd Duck
Guidance Encouragement Policies Correction Salary Potential Problems: Expectations Budget	Cooperation Work ethic Positive attitude Dependable Potential Problems: Schedule conflicts Disappearing act Illness Family issues	Raise their kids in Christ Volunteer as needed Possible \$ donors Potential Problems: Expectations Family issues Bad example to kids See you as replacement	Financial support Potential Problems: One time only

What they should expect from you:

Church Leadership	Volunteer Staff	Parents	The Odd Duck
Cooperation Regular updates Work ethic Positive attitude Dependable Solid Christian walk Shared vision Shared mission	Guidance Encouragement Training Communication Support Praise Gratitude Coffee	Respect Guidance Listening ear Communication Great teaching Fun events for kids Visitation if needed	Gratitude Perhaps anonymity Wise spending

Building your base is super important. It's CRITICAL!
So let's spend a little more time with it...

Let's cherry pick from those lists.

What you should expect from them:

Church Leaders

Guidance from the leadership is of top importance. Be sure they have made their expectations clear to you (put the job description in writing). By living within their vision you can safely expect to keep your job! One issue that many children's pastors face is reconciling expectations with budget. A stingy budget makes it difficult to meet all the goals. (A later article takes a very helpful look at the topic of budgets; I know it'll help you understand how budgets can go from curses to blessings.)

Volunteer Staff

A volunteer who can be counted upon to show up when scheduled, on time and ready to rock is an absolute treasure. Probably the biggest pothole for me over the years has been vacations and staycations. Many teachers have kids, we live on an amazing island with lots of beach and mountain activities—the families love to go play on the weekends. Imagine my joy when parents /teachers would tell me their kids agreed to go have family fun on the weekend only if they'd be back in time for Sunday School! More on that later.

Make it a point to thank those who consistently serve in the kids ministry.

Parents

There are two main categories of parents that you will deal with: Church members and the unchurched. The non-Christian parent that believes "church is good for our kids but we don't need it" is basically asking you to replace them. Bear in mind that you are not a **replacement** for the parents, you are a **resource** for the parents.

Our Pastor Rick tells the tale of, more than once, being invited into a non-Christian home to convince a kid not to smoke dope. During these meetings the parents would light up or hit the bong. This was back when all this was illegal everywhere.

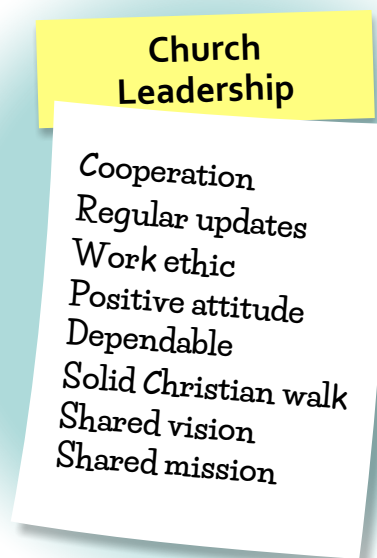
The Odd Duck

When we were building our first church campus, people would stop and ask what was going on. Visitors to the island would stop and ask what we were building. We'd tell them we're building a church. Several times these complete strangers would pull out a checkbook and make a contribution. Twice we got checks handed out a car window for \$5,000 each!

What they should expect from you:

Church Leaders

Every item in the list shown in the cartoon sticky note is pretty much self-explanatory. The important thing to point out here is that they are ALL important. Consistently keep them all and your leaders will love you. If you were to make this a list you kept with you and checked every day until everything became second nature, you'd be doing a smart thing.



Volunteer Staff

If you take a look back at the cartoon sticky notes a couple of pages back you'll notice that 'coffee' is on the list. That's not just a tongue-in-cheek joke, it's actually a practical and profitable way to spend a bit of time. If you like coffee—or whatever—meet your people one-on-one from time to time. And not for a 'business' meeting, make it fun fellowship. Catch up on the prayer needs. (EXTRA TIP from me: No gossiping and not too much complaining!)

Parents

Parents love their kids. They want to know that you love them too. What are some ways you are showing God's love to the kids He has given you?

The Odd Duck

The best way to show appreciation to a financial donor (someone who gives over and above your budget) is to spend the money wisely (even if the Odd Duck is your dad). My youth pastor back in the day, Pastor Von, founded a ministry to orphans in Mexico. An old lady would mail him a contribution every month. It was always for one dollar, because that was all she could afford. Literally a check for one dollar. Von made sure to wisely spend each dollar in Mexico. As he said, her sacrificial giving taught him the value of a dollar.

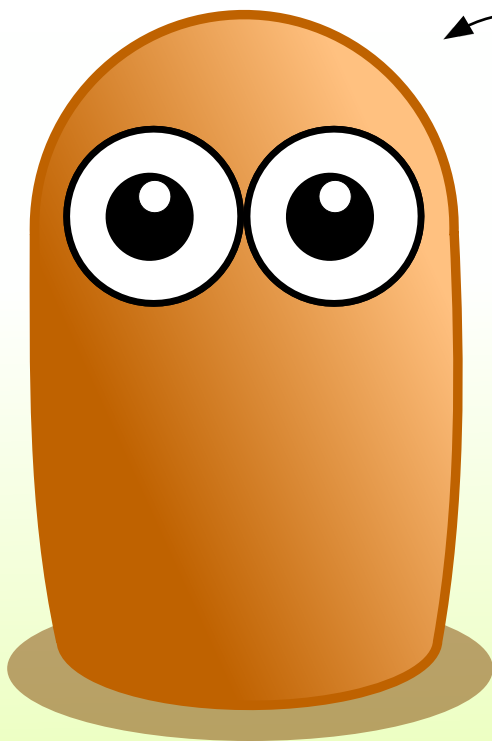
THE KEY TO RECRUITING

- **There's probably a million ways**

to recruit volunteer workers to support you in your ministry. You can skip this article if you have found great ways to gather people to your cause. **No, this article is from a guy who is truly terrible at finding and recruiting new helpers. But I found the key to success that worked super well for me.** I thought I'd share in case it works for you.

- **The Key: Recruit one person, then stop.**

Before we get into understanding this key, let's define what I mean by recruiting...



So you are trying to get this potato to help you with your potato patch. Said potato will reveal to you one of two attitudes...

- **HAPPY TO HELP.** Merely alerting this tuber to the opportunity is enough to land a volunteer. This is NOT recruiting, it's simply inviting a willing person to join your team. Easy, and you should do this a lot.
- **RELUCTANT OR WORSE.** Getting a person who doesn't naturally step up to the plate—THIS is recruiting, according to our definition. You have to come armed with some mighty persuasive arguments to break down the target's objections.

It was a nightmare. Then it got worse.

It was a major challenge to staff all the rooms on Sunday morning. We needed two people each for Nursery, Toddlers, Preschool, Early, Middle and Upper Elementary. That's twelve people. OK, we got that going, sorta. Then it happened: the church went to **two services**. Instantly I needed twenty-four people all bright and shiny and ready to serve. Eek!

From that point on every Sunday would have at least one class with no one to teach; I had to flag down High School kids as they walked into the sanctuary to see if they would babysit the abandoned kiddies.

But once I stumbled upon the key that worked for me, it all turned around. In a church of less than 500 adults, I had SIXTY active volunteers working in our kids ministry—by far the largest staff in our fellowship. What a blessing!

Oboy, a Chart:

NEW RECRUITS: No one likes to have their arm twisted, and none of us enjoy doing that. Once I stopped doing that, I quickly went from twenty volunteers to forty.

HAPPY TO HELP: The ones that willingly join your ministry when they hear the call. A good source: Parents that stick their heads into a class to see what their kid is up to. Invite them to stay. Talk to them after.

EXISTING WORKERS: The foundation of your children's ministry. They may be people you've brought in or possibly inherited when you came in.



So here's the Key: RECRUIT A RECRUITER

Yeah, I felt pretty dumb that I hadn't realized this sooner. The principle is simple: If I can't pull it off effectively, **do I know someone who can?** Recruit that person, then walk away from the task and watch your staff begin to grow!

Here's how it happened...

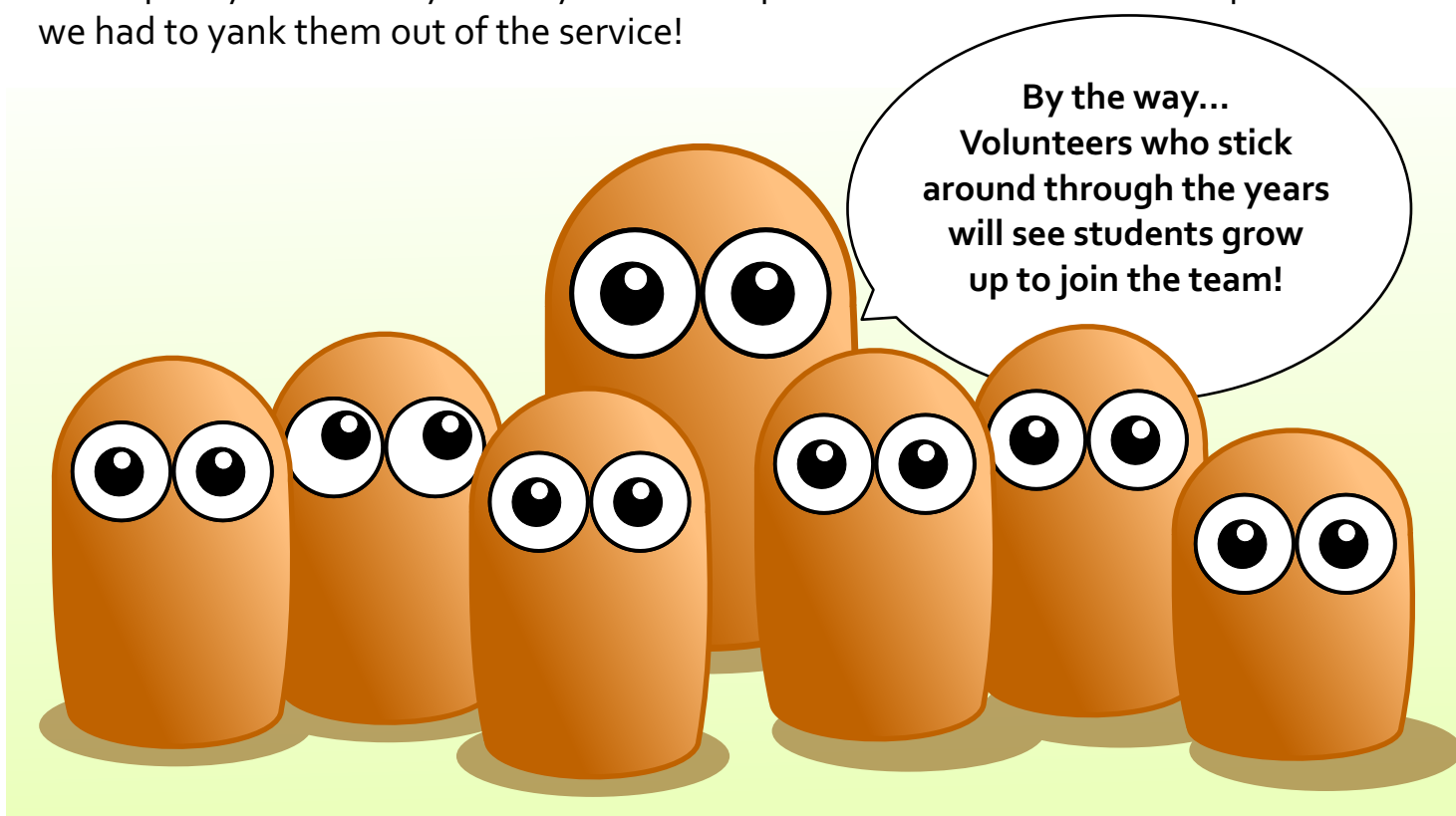
At that time our church had five pastors that would rotate the preaching job on Sunday mornings. Yes, totally not standard, but it worked great for us. As it turned out, two of the pastors were popular with the younger adults in the congregation but not so much with the older. Two others were popular with the older, but not the younger. The fifth pastor was (and is) super-popular with literally EVERYONE. Guess which one found it easy to build a team of servants willing to step into my ministry?

It was our Pastor Dain Spore, now co-founder of Christ's Love And Majesty Ministries, publisher of the magazine you're reading right now, plus much more. When Dain stepped up to the mic and told people the needs in our Sunday School, it was night and day. Before, when I got up there to explain our needs, or when any of the other four pastors did, not much happened. But Dain got us **seven volunteers** that very morning. And they were good ones, too.

This success put a smile on all the over-worked existing volunteers. The new optimism attracted more and more and we grew.

Disclaimer!

Even at our highest levels of voluntarism we still had the sudden sickness or other issues pretty much every Sunday. We developed several volunteers to step in even if we had to yank them out of the service!



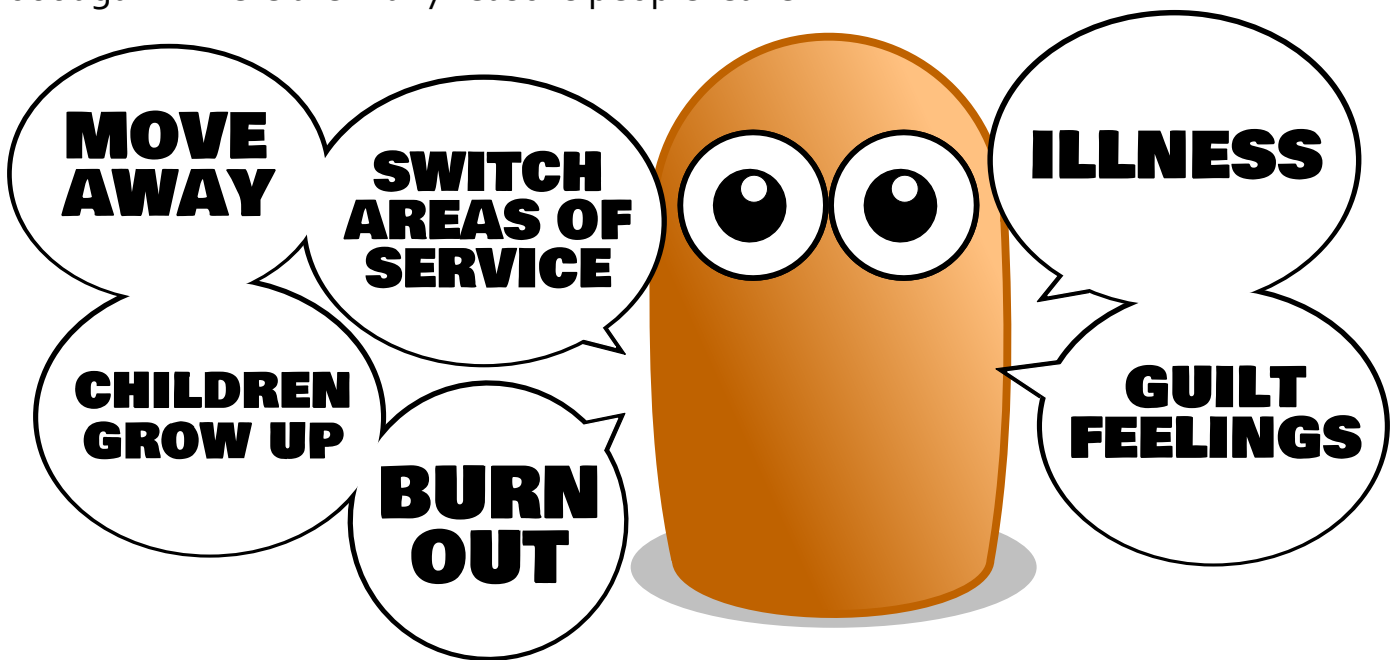
HERE'S HOW TO **BURN OUT** YOUR VOLUNTEERS!

A Checklist

- ✓ Over-schedule.
- ✓ Make them come in Saturdays.
- ✓ Kids' needs come first.
- ✓ Late lesson plans.
- ✓ Junk lesson plans.
- ✓ Meetings, Meetings Meetings.
- ✓ Don't communicate.
- ✓ You know more than they do.

Now that you have a full staff, all is good...

Well, **not so fast** there. Success in recruiting is like opening a front door to bring them in, that's great. But now you have to deal with the **back door** where they slip out again. There are many reasons people leave:



The Toolbox Empire is located in a resort area on a lovely island (just a collection plate toss from the Big Save grocery store). People move here, join the church, volunteer for Sunday School—but after a couple of years realize island life ain't one big vacation in paradise after all, so home they go. For us, **moving away** is our biggest back door.

Young volunteers leave for college. Older volunteers move away to be closer to their young grandkids.

Many parents teach or assist in Sunday School because their kids are in the class. When the **kids graduate out**, the parents exit too. Our second largest back door.

Longterm illness can happen, but for us it has happily been very rare.

Over the years a noticeable percentage have switched from Children's Ministry service to **church greeters**. Yep, a big competitor for our volunteers has always been the greeters ministry. I wonder if that might be your experience as well. Seems strange to me. But it's an easier job so I guess that's why.

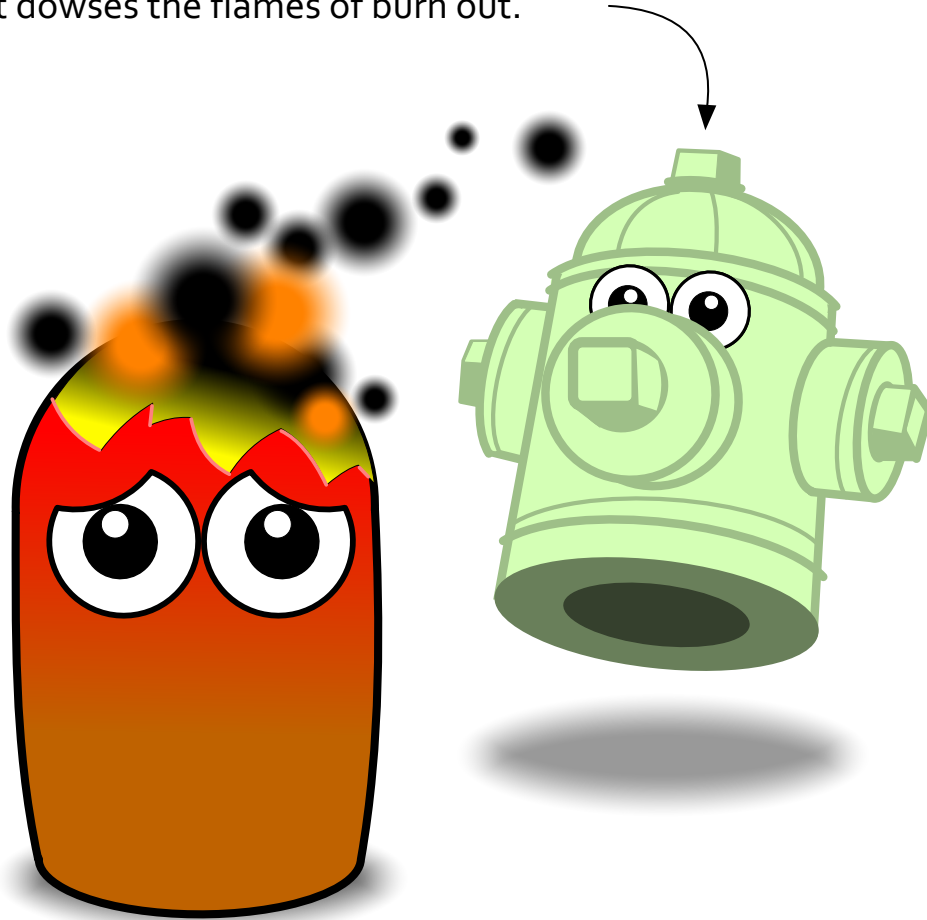
You might be wondering about the **guilt feelings** in the cartoon above. It's bound to happen sooner or later to one or more people on your staff: They lose their temper with a kid and say or do something unacceptable, or an injury harms a child; that kind of stuff. Guilt eats them up and they quit.

Then there's **BURN OUT**. There's something special about this one...

It's OUR FAULT!

Face it; **there are never enough volunteers to go around**. So we start the fires of burn out. Asking volunteers to step in too often. Over-scheduling. Collaring over and over the same volunteer at the last minute to save your bacon. It's all stressful for everyone, including you. As polite and nice and forgiving as most of your volunteers are, nobody loves a heavy burden. You do not want teaching to become something to be avoided! Don't let the joy of teaching turn to drudgery.

The only person who can put out the fire is YOU. You need to be, and can be, the extinguisher that dowses the flames of burn out.

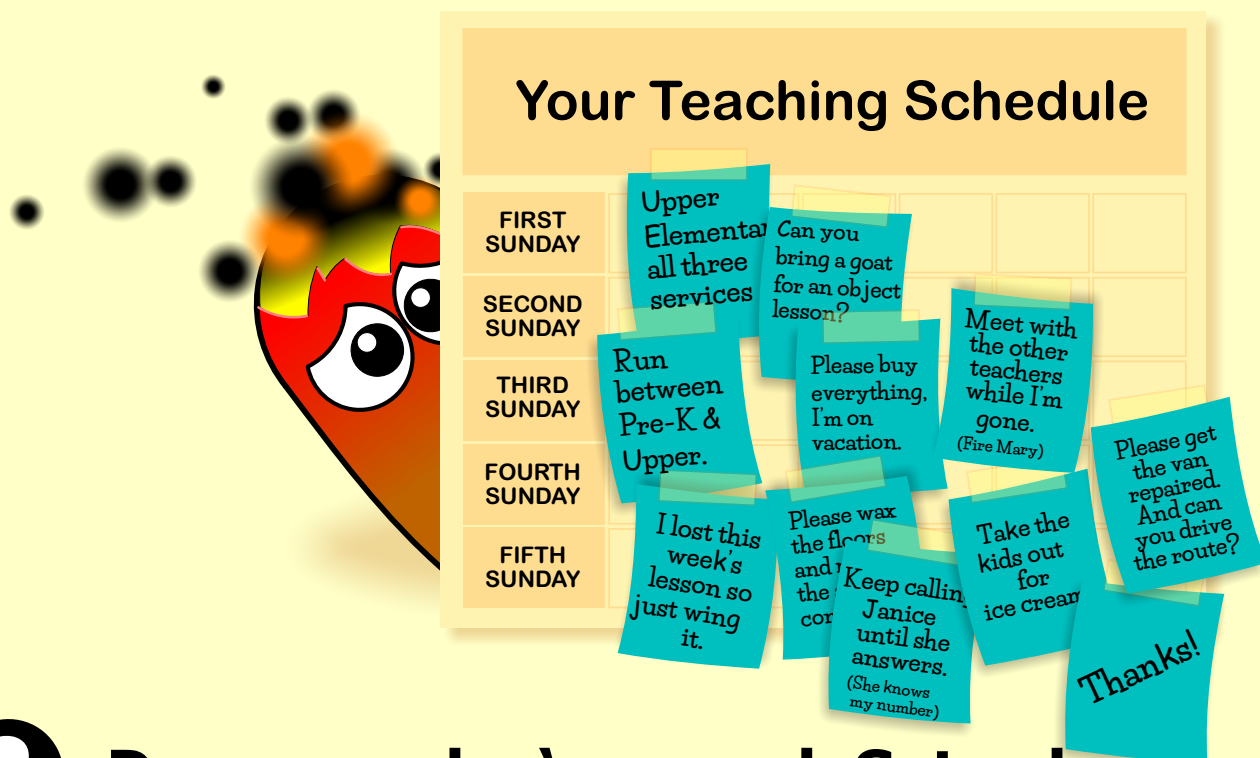


Have you ever had a volunteer turn away when they see you coming? I have, and it's not fun.

Some Wisdom Regarding Burn Out:

1 Do you over-schedule?

The solution to this one is to do a better job recruiting. We refer you to the article, *The Key to Recruiting*.



2 Do you make 'em work Saturdays?

If you are being paid by your church, you should be the one to come in before Sunday to print and prep all the lessons, and to do any shopping required for special materials and snacks. Actually, you should do the printing more than a week in advance in case the printer needs service and parts. Sooner or later, that printer will let you down—very bad if you like to print the hour before class!

3 Do kids' needs come before teachers?

If you sense that you've reached the point where you are really stepping on your volunteers' toes, it might be smarter to combine two classes for a week or so instead of insisting that someone—anyone—be put upon to keep all doors open. I've actually closed classes down (a very few times) when there was simply no one available. If you do shut a class down (sending the kids into the service with their parents) be sure to run this by your leadership; they might find the idea unacceptable.

4 Are you late with lesson plans?

One good reason to know who is teaching two or three weeks down the road is therefore knowing to whom to email a lesson plan well in advance. Teachers freak out when they don't know what to expect until that lesson shows up at the very last minute, or not at all. Some teachers are great at winging it, but it's a really bad policy to keep them in suspense. If they expect you to be late with the lessons, it's one more burden they carry, one more reason to burn out.

5 Do you use junk lesson plans?

Be sure to get the teachers' take on the curriculum. Do this every so often. Are the lessons tough to grasp? Are they fun to teach? Are the kids bored? If you are taking over from a previous kids ministry leader, don't feel you have to stay married to the curriculum. Go with the one that most blesses you.

6 Are you calling too many meetings?

Some people love meetings. I don't and will vote for any national leader that promises to make meetings illegal. More truthfully, I've done them and they can be fun so I'm sorta OK with them. Once or twice a year. Once a month wears people out, imho.

7 Do you communicate?

If you aren't having meetings, you still need to talk to everyone when they are scheduled to teach. To me, emailing the lesson with an invitation to reply with thoughts or questions, plus a quick gab fest before and after the class is about right. This way, teachers feel you are available and interested in their success in class.

8 Do you know more than the teacher?

Don't let your teachers think you don't hear them. Of course you know more than they do about many things in your ministry, but anyone that has taught the same class multiple times will know more about the kids than do you, and they will likely have a good understanding of what works and what doesn't with the lessons you are using. **You can learn a lot from talking with your volunteers!**

The Sunday School Wisdom Section

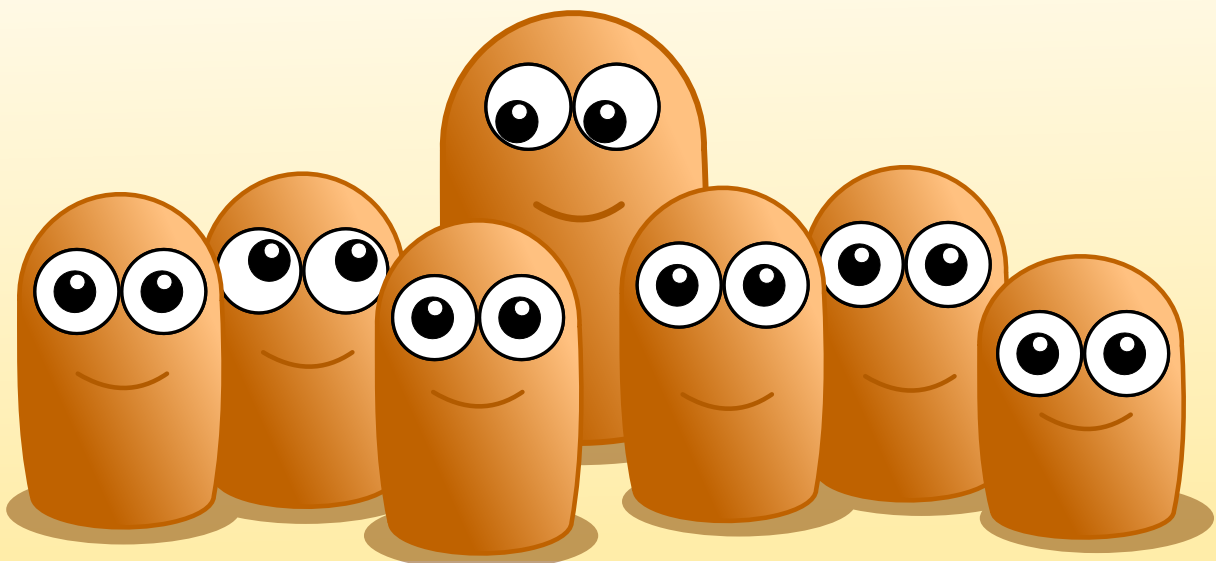
**Is it time to pump some life back into your Sunday School?
I've been there.**

No, I don't mean I've been to your Sunday School. C'mon, you know what I mean! Over the years I have witnessed a number of children's ministries that had lost the sharp edge they probably had at one time. Is it the curriculum? Good-hearted but inexperienced teachers? Paint fumes?

Can't help you with the paint fumes, but I do have some practical steps that I've taken in my own 25-year Sunday School ministry, steps that have worked very well and will likely do the same for you:

- **The 10-minute Sunday School:** A proven way to combat boredom.
- **Team Up for Fun:** One great way to keep kids truly tuned in.
- **Filling Dead Air:** Saving the lives of worried teachers everywhere.

Taken together, these straightforward, easy to implement actions have pumped energy into our Sunday School ministry for years. They'll work for you, too! Read on...



The 10-Minute Sunday School Safety Valve

Here's something to get one thinking: What if, by tradition, Sunday School was only ten minutes long each week?

There would only be time for a quick Bible story and one activity. Hand out snacks as the kids leave. No time for boredom. No time for more than one point. Quick, straight to the target.

Sounds pretty good! And this leads to a great idea that can really bump up the quality and success of every lesson you ever teach: **Keep every activity to ten minutes or less.**



The 10-Minute Sunday School Safety Valve: With few exceptions, **no activity in your class should last more than ten minutes.**

That's it. Short and sweet. But wait! It's a HUGE bit of wisdom!
Ignore it at your own peril.



"It's a sin to bore kids with the Bible."

And so unnecessary. Adults have trained themselves to listen to and even enjoy forty minute sermons, but kids? Most kids just aren't at that stage yet. An hour of dull Sunday School is torture.

One sixty-minute Sunday School or six ten-minute Sunday Schools?

Look at the graphic below. It shows six ten-minute segments that chain together to fill an hour. At least four of the six are Bible learning activities. They should all be different from each other, yet teach the same truth that you want the kids to learn.



Snack time doesn't count, and the opening activity may or may not be a learning activity. The Bible story contains the main point and purpose of the lesson, obviously. That leaves three activities to support the Bible story. One activity could be a game the whole class plays together. Another could be an appropriate craft such as making big posters for the wall. Then there are mazes, Bible board games, coloring pages, object lessons.

So which is better from the teacher's point of view and the kids' point of view: an hour that just falls apart, or one activity out of six that doesn't work out so well?

That's why we say ten-minute segments are the Sunday School Safety Valve. Activity isn't working? No problem, in a couple of minutes we'll be doing something completely different.



Teach Your Teachers the 10-Minute Limit!

FUN In Sunday School

In this article we ponder

- Two types of fun important to quality Sunday School experiences for kids;
- The challenge of making Sunday School fun for bored kids;
- The Number One best way to ramp up the fun with almost any learning activity.

There are two types of fun. Both are equally important in your quest to reel kids in.



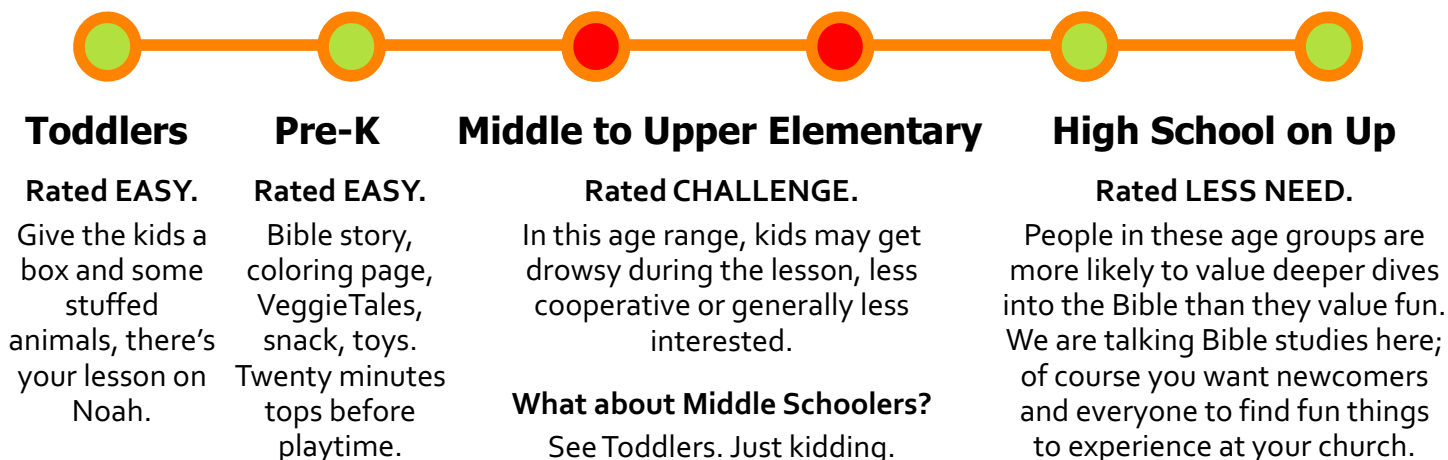
Fun Type One: Fun Activities

It may be different for adults, but with kids the stuff you ask them to do needs to be fun. Anything from a table top Sunday School worksheet to your biggest event of the year; gotta be good. Details coming right up.

Fun Type Two: Fun Atmosphere

Let's talk people. The folks who work with the kids set the style of atmosphere. Are they cheerful? Do they smile and speak with humor? Do the kids love them? These type of people make even a dull classroom a fun place to be.

The Fun Scale



But Let's Catch Our Breath Here...

Keep two things in mind.

- **Fun is a tool, not a goal.** Your ultimate goal is to disciple kids to stay glued to the Lord their entire lives. Your objective each time you work with kids is to take a step forward on the path of discipleship.
- **Fun doesn't change lives, the Holy Spirit does.** Great Christian men and women come out of some of the most inept children's ministries. When the Spirit of God works on a kid's heart, it doesn't matter if the classroom is awesome or the lesson plans are hilarious. Even so, fun is an effective tool to draw kids in and keep them, so use it liberally.

OK! It's Pop Quiz Time:

Take this tiny test, then we'll give you an amazing tip that will drastically up the fun level of practically **any** lesson activity.

**Place the following typical Sunday School lesson activities
in the order you think kids would find most fun.**
(Think Middle and Upper Elementary)

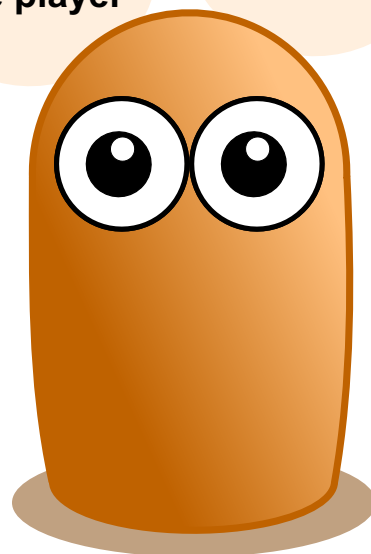
**The
Bible story**

**Table
board game
for two or
more
players**

**Word
Search for
one player**

**Crossword
Puzzle for
one player**

**Draw
something**



One AMAZING Tip coming up...

Putting myself in the shoes of a kid,
here is how I rate these activities fun-wise:

First Place

**Table
board game
for two or
more
players**

Second Place

**Draw
something**

Third Place

**The
Bible story**

Fourth Place

**Crossword
Puzzle for
one player**

Dead Last

**Word
Search for
one player**

After applying the tip we are about to tell you, here's the result:

Tied for First Place

**Table
board game
for two or
more
players**

**The
Bible story**

**Crossword
Puzzle for
one player**

**Draw
something**

Dead Last

**Word
Search for
one player**

**Wait a minute...
what about
that Word Search
game?**

Oh, you noticed that, did you? As someone who has written Sunday School lessons for several major Christian publishing companies, been the Managing Editor of a Sunday School Publisher's youth department and who has spent decades teaching the kids, I assure you that when you see a word search activity, it means the writer **has run out of ideas**. So, yeah, don't use 'em.

Hey, let's get on with that tip...

All right already. The Tip:

Get ALL of your kids doing an activity!

Any activity is most fun when the entire class is involved. Here's how:

Simply form two teams and have the teams take turns trying to outdo each other.

Table board game for two or more players

Any board game played by two or more players can be "giant-sized" and displayed on a wall, table or floor. Teams take turns spinning a spinner; the teacher moves the teams' paper tokens taped to the board game (if on a wall). Great fun for a Bible version of Snakes and Ladders and virtually any other board game.

The Bible story

As you begin the Bible story, let your students know that afterwards they will play a team game based on the story. Each time a team correctly answers a Bible story question they will be able to take a turn on the game. You'll need to prepare questions in advance. You can use standard games like Connect 4 or Jeopardy.

Crossword Puzzle for one player

One of the games in my Adventures of Daniel resource is the Team Crossword wall game in the second lesson. Games like these do a super job of cementing facts and truths from the Bible into the minds and hearts of your learners.

Draw something

If a small group creating a poster is better than one kid sketching a picture, how much better the whole class painting a masterpiece on a paper painter's tarp! Use the plastic backed type. What could possibly go wrong?

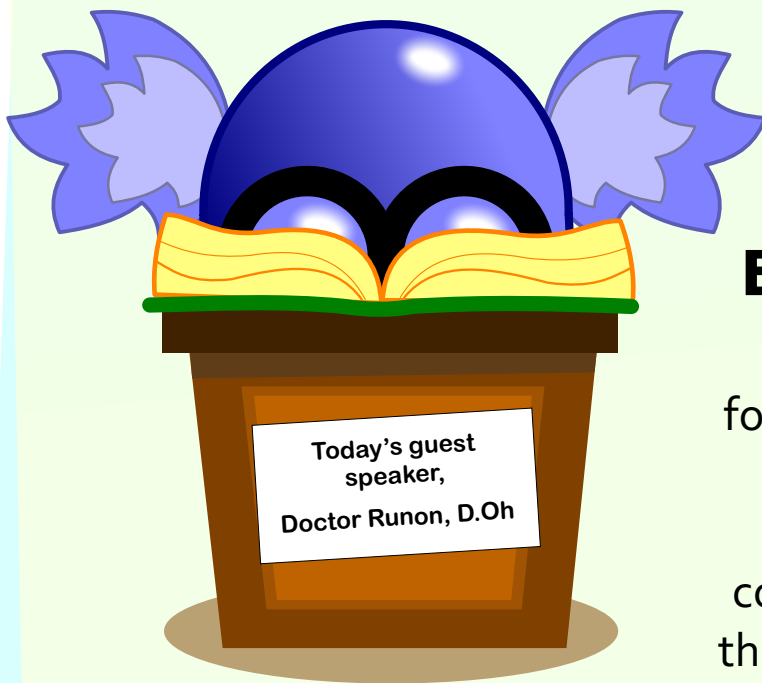
Word Search for one player

Well, just in case your Senior Pastor happens to be the National Word Search Champion, let's see if we can figure out how to make this game more fun...nope, sorry. Can't be done. (Actually, you could put one-word games on individual pages to use like flash cards. That might work, but I'm not convinced.)

Solving SUNDAY SCHOOL DEAD AIR

If you are an experienced kids ministry leader, you are likely prepared for that much-dreaded moment when someone leans in your door and announces, "Excuse me, looks like our guest speaker isn't going to stop any time soon."

The regular pastors at my church are very good at ending at the same predictable time each week. But guest preachers? Not so much.



Even TEN MINUTES is an eternity

for an unready teacher after the lesson runs out. Finish the lesson, close in prayer, then comes the warning, "Sorry, the theologian from Scotland is only on his tenth point downstairs."

(Said visiting theologian has gone twenty minutes over more than once).

There are two categories of solutions to the time problem:

1 FILLING TIME

2 KILLING TIME

FILLING TIME: Any activities that include spiritual content such as Bible activity pages, Bible-based board games, a Bible story, a personal story that makes a kid-level spiritual point, and the like.

KILLING TIME: Sounds bad, but is just fine if not over-used. Activities include extra snack or playground time, toy playtime, watching a video, friends hanging with friends and so forth.

Every Classroom needs an EMERGENCY KIT!

And in each kit, which should be in a clearly labeled box or drawer, should be the following things, depending on age-level:

- **Bible Activity Pages** such as the ones mentioned at the end of this manual.
- **Short Videos.** Classic VeggieTales are great, some even work with older kids.
- **Bible table games.** Stick 'em in the box for something quick to grab.
- **Snacks.** Be sure to refresh them from time to time. A spot in the church fridge is good (add a sign warning the youth group that thieves will be handed over to you-know-who).
- **Crafts.** Colored paper, tape, Legos—keep your favorites on hand. White cardboard coffee cups can be handed out; kids draw faces on them and perform mini-Bible reenactments.

Oh, look at the TIME!

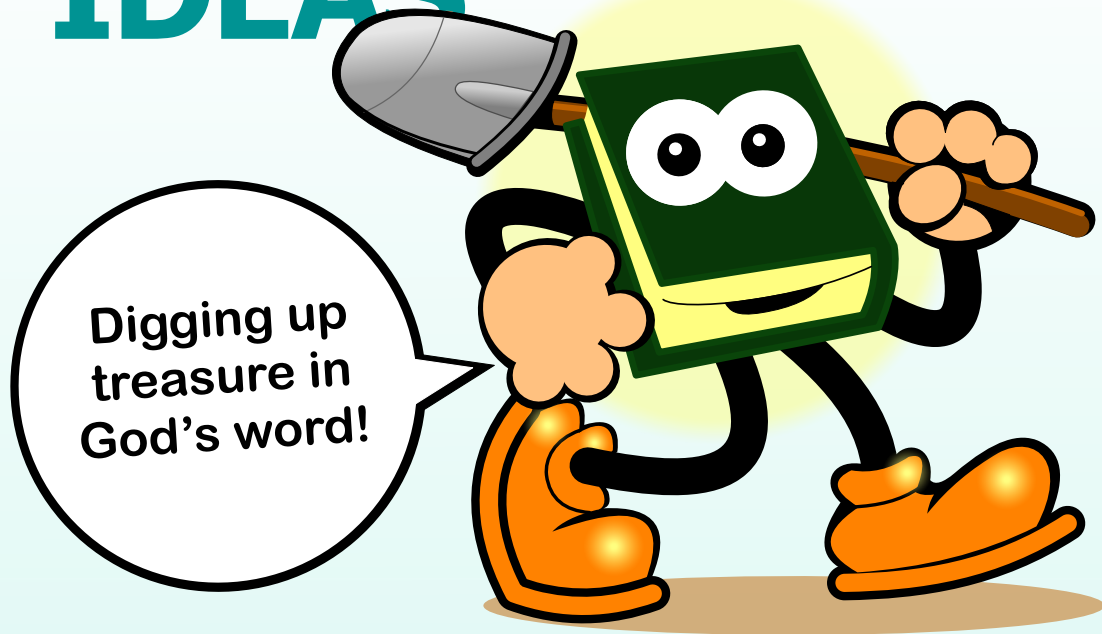
Virtually every activity listed on the previous page takes **ten minutes** or so to accomplish. That covers a LOT of dead air!



One PITFALL to avoid...

Tell your teachers: Don't let kids use their phones or tablets in **class**, especially alone by themselves. This sets a bad precedent that robs kids of the higher-quality fun they can enjoy **together**.

The Best SUNDAY SCHOOL IDEAS



Here are Bible Learning Activities kids love. Almost all of these are used in our CLAMbake Curriculum, available at clamcentral.com starting early 2024

Bible 5-Card • A game featuring 25 cards focused on people, events or themes found in the Bible. Five kids can play with each set of cards.

Each player takes five cards to hold. There is another set for the teacher to use. Each time the teacher calls out a new card, the player with that card puts it on the table. First player to put down all five cards wins.

To make your own custom cards, put one significant word from your Bible story on each card. Discuss as the words are played.

Bible Wars • Every kid in class is given a Bible in which to look up references. Call out a reference; the first player to find it stands up and reads. If correct, that team gets the points. To help kids do well, let them leave their Bibles open to the table of contents. Also make a rule that an individual cannot answer twice in a row.

DIY Comics • Cartoon versions of Bible stories in which many of the faces of animals and people are left blank for the kids to draw in. Great for the kids that like to draw.

Four Corners • This game gets kids out of their chairs and moving from one end of the room to the other multiple times. Tape four sheets of paper with Bible words or heroes or whatever, high on the wall, one per room corner. On your signal, each child chooses a corner. The teacher calls out a corner (drawing shuffled cards or using a spinner); anyone in that corner is eliminated. If you don't want to eliminate kids, then make it so any kids in the called-out corner gets points. Keep track of the points as you play several rounds.

Reverse Hangman • Individuals or teams try NOT to guess the letters that solve a Bible word or phrase. The player or team stuck with the last available letter loses the game. Intense!

Nose Picker • Nineteen cards with Bible verses or themes to discuss, plus five cards labeled 'Nose Picker.' Spread out all the cards face down on a table with the Nose Picker cards mixed in randomly. Form two teams. The teams take turns turning up one card per turn. Discuss each Bible card. First team to pick three Noses loses the game. Turn up the rest of the cards to discuss. Very suspenseful game!

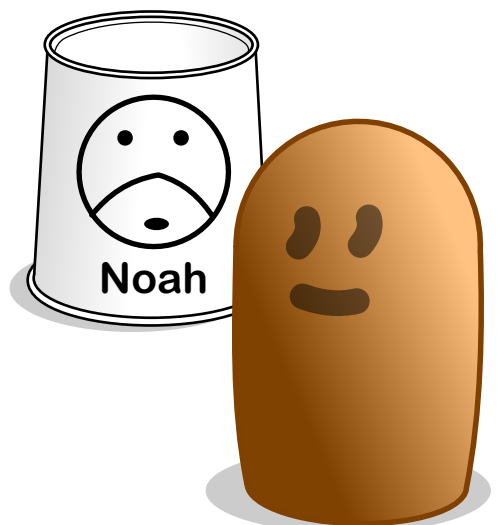
Object Lessons • We have LOTS (most with free lesson plans and activity pages) at our YouTube channel:

youtube.com/TheObjectLessonsChannel

Order of Events • For a surprisingly tough challenge, pick a fairly well known Bible story, write it out in a dozen or more sections, one per card. Small groups try to be the first to find the correct order of cards. Even the Christmas story and the Easter story can be hard to figure out.

Pitch Penny • Here's an example of how this game works: On a large sheet of poster paper draw ten circles with one of the Ten Commandments in each. Place the poster on the floor next to a wall, clear a space and let teams try to gently toss a coin or rolled up sock into the circles. Keep track of which ones are hit; the team that scores the final circle (or the most circles) wins the game.

Potato People or Story Cups • Draw faces on white coffee cups or potatoes (cut the bottom off the potatoes so they can stand up). Kids use these to retell Bible stories. Depending on the story make Bible good guys and bad guys, animals such as sheep and so forth. Cups can be stacked to create walls and buildings.



Coin Flip • The entire class stands. Those that think you will flip heads stay standing, those who think tails sit down. Wrong guessers are eliminated. Play until the final round eliminates the last players, they lasted the longest so they win. Good game to start a discussion on wise decision making or trusting that our future isn't a coin toss, it's in God's hands.

Cootie Catcher • A fun child's game. Check the Internet for YouTube tutorials. You can put eight short phrases inside for kids to find. Quick prayers, titles of God and Jesus, game points or whatever fits with your purpose.

Crosswords • It's not that hard to make a simple crossword puzzle from words found in a Bible story. You'll like the feeling of satisfaction when you get more than two words to fit together!

Diorama • Don't forget these. Have your kids build walls, temples, forts from Bible days on their tables. Dioramas can also be drawn, or a combination of drawn characters with constructed items. Stack paper cups for walls and towers.

Skits • You have a phone camera; use it to take photos or videos of your gang posing various scenes from your Bible story. Even better, use an iPad or similar. The big screen makes it easy for everyone to smile at their finished production.

Twenty Questions • Players can ask yes or no questions to discover the Bible object you are thinking about. It could be a harp (King David was an expert player) or anything that fits the story you are teaching.

Sack Puppets • The older the kids are, the crazier the results can be!

The CLAMeter (Closer Look At Meter) • When studying the story of a Bible hero or villain of your choice, have the kids vote to rate the person on a scale of one to ten, ten being best. Do it for multiple categories. For example, if you tell the story of Peter declaring Jesus to be the Christ, kids could rate Peter's faith, insight and commitment. That's three categories. Add up the three numbers the kids voted for, divide by three and there's Peter's rating. Works especially well if the following week you teach about Peter trying to stop Jesus from dying for our sins. Or Peter denying the Lord three times!

Clip Art • Grab a bunch of magazines for the kids to cut apart, looking for photos and words to tape or paste to poster paper. It's a good idea to first tear out any pages that might be inappropriate for children to see (fashion ads can be pretty suggestive).

Hats and Masks • Making a mask or hat is a fun craft project. The end result can serve as costume props.

Codes • To decode, of course!

Some Thoughts...

Here's some examples of things I've done to make my kids ministry fun...

Fun in Sunday School: Typical Examples

I told the kids, "Jesus is the bridge that brings us to God the Father." To make this fun, I had placed boards and things around the outside of the building, making them look like leftover construction materials. I challenged the kids to run outside and find stuff they could use to make a bridge between two chairs on the lawn. One sentence turned into 15 minutes of active fun. Lesson driven home.

For the Parable of the Four Soils, I covered a large classroom table with a paper tarp and sent the kids out to find the things Jesus mentioned. The kids dumped buckets of dirt, rocks, weeds and even a healthy bush they had managed to steal!

We lowered a kid from an attic crawl space on the ceiling to reenact Jesus healing the paralyzed guy.

The kids broke eggs with hammers when discussing the spread of the gospel.

We painted and pinned t-shirts stuffed with balloons to the wall when we talked about the religious "stuffed shirts" Jesus faced.

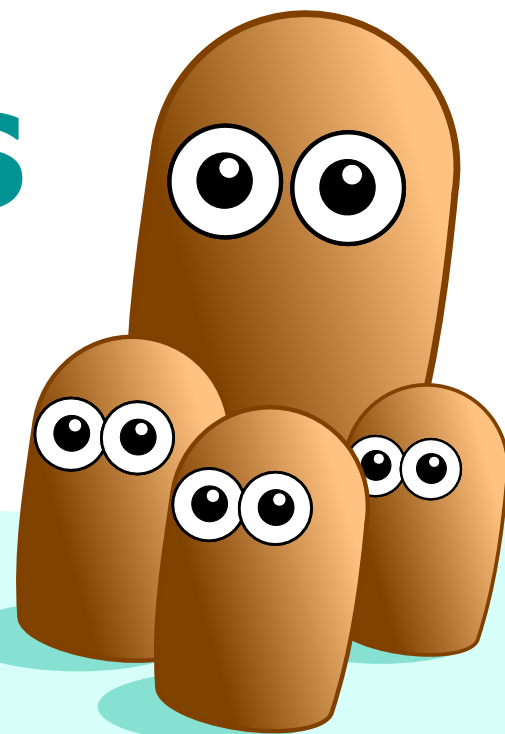
We used straws to fire cotton swabs at a distant target when talking about falling short of God's glory.

We dipped real fish from the grocery store in paint to make Japanese art (can't remember the point, but there was one...).

Fun for the Teachers

I printed and prepped all lessons for all age-levels and provided all the materials. The teachers only had to show up and enjoy the kids.

The Best CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TIPS and IDEAS



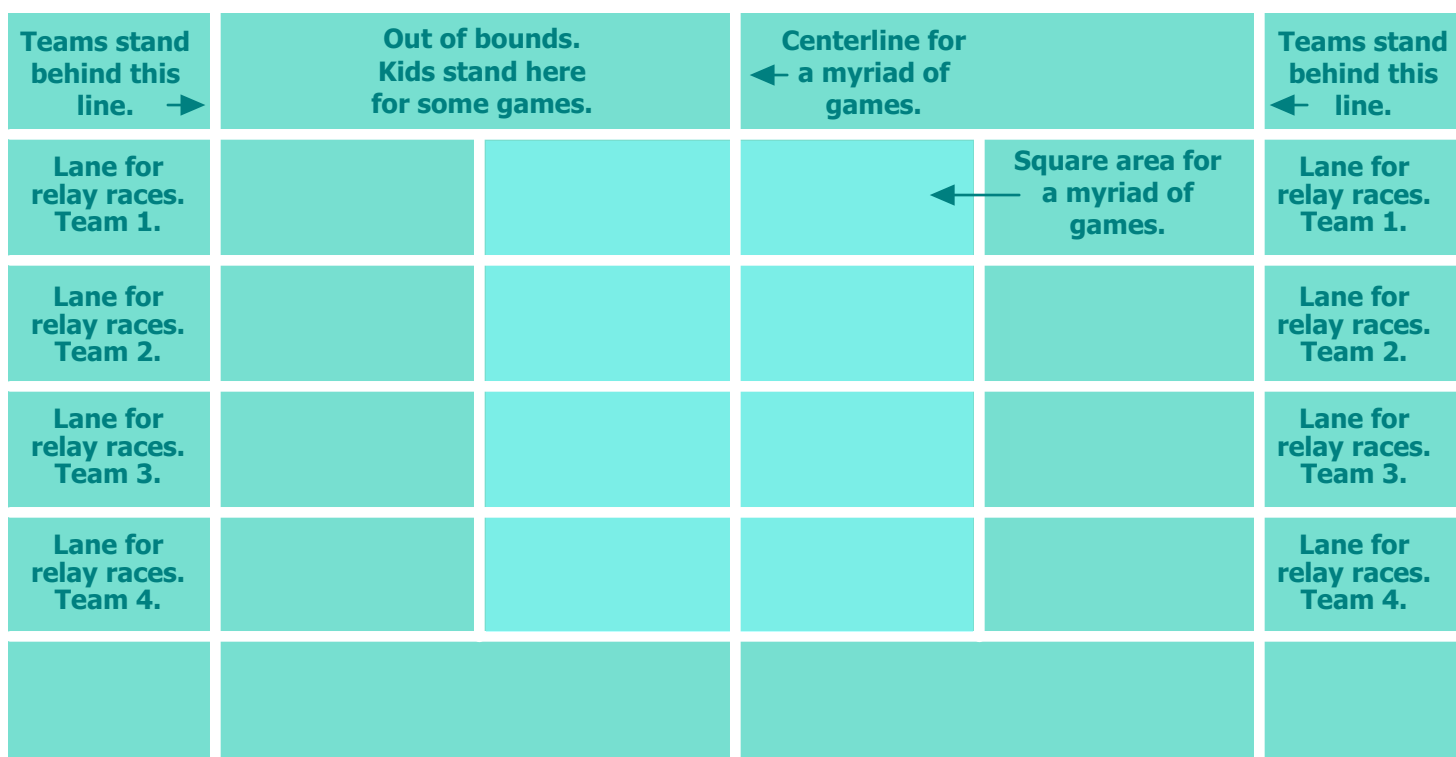
A list of typical Children's Ministry events and ideas, all in one handy place.

Make a Movie • Zombies are always good, but here's an idea you might not have tried: We call it "Chickenator: This Time It's Fowl."

Giant spaceships (egg cartons) have bombed the earth with huge eggs that will hatch into monster chickens that will destroy the world. Although most of the eggs break when they hit the ground, one survives and becomes the foul Chickenator.

For our film, the part of Chickenator was played by a rubber chicken that made a hilarious and very obnoxious sqwak when squeezed. Toy soldiers attacked but were always pecked to death. It took the brilliant Professor Whatzit of U-CRUD (the University College of Research Und Development) to invent the weapon that saved the world (a giant can of Silly String).

Camp Lost in Time • Every camp we do we add an on-going team game that starts the first day and ends on the last. At Camp Lost in Time, for instance, teams (cabins) are sent to various times in the past and future. As each challenge is completed successfully, teams receive parts for a time machine so they can "go back home after camp." Epochs include the Wild West (shoot arrows at raw steak for your dinner), the Golden Age of Rock and Roll (listen to a message embedded in an Elvis song), Pirates, Caveman, Elijah and the 450 Prophets of Baal, Space and more. The idea is that all teams will complete all the challenges, but on the last day only the first team to finish the final two epochs wins. They get a ton of food and snacks and are encouraged to share with everyone.



Game Floor • If your church has a room for kids to play sport-style games, you know the need to tape lines to the floor for boundaries and things. Here's the tape plan that works for virtually every game you wanna know about.

Scavenger Hunt • To make this a hit with kids, line up homes in advance and give the people that answer the doors things for the hunters to get. For example, if you are having a party after the hunt, teams of hunters should be given a list of needed items to collect such as hamburger buns, hotdog buns, mustard, soft drinks and so forth. One place gives out bottles of mustard, another gives out bags of chips—you know how it goes. First team to the party with all the types of food wins. But there is a trick to making this work. When it's time for the hunt to start, all the drivers are given a different home to drive to; they take off in all

directions. They must return to you before they can find out the next place to drive to and so on until they are done. You need to plan things carefully to be sure all teams go to all homes.

For food safety, meat should be stored at the party host house rather than distributed to the homes.

Family Board Games Night • Gather all the board games you can find for this one. Set up tables and open the doors to your church families and friends.

Bike Adventure • Make this a family event.

Food Bank • It's always a good time to host a food drive. Make a nice reward for all involved such as a pool party if possible. Also, if your budget can spare it, give small groups of kids (each with a driver) some money and a list of food to buy, send them to the grocery stores and let them shop for the best bargains. They then drop the food off at the local food bank.

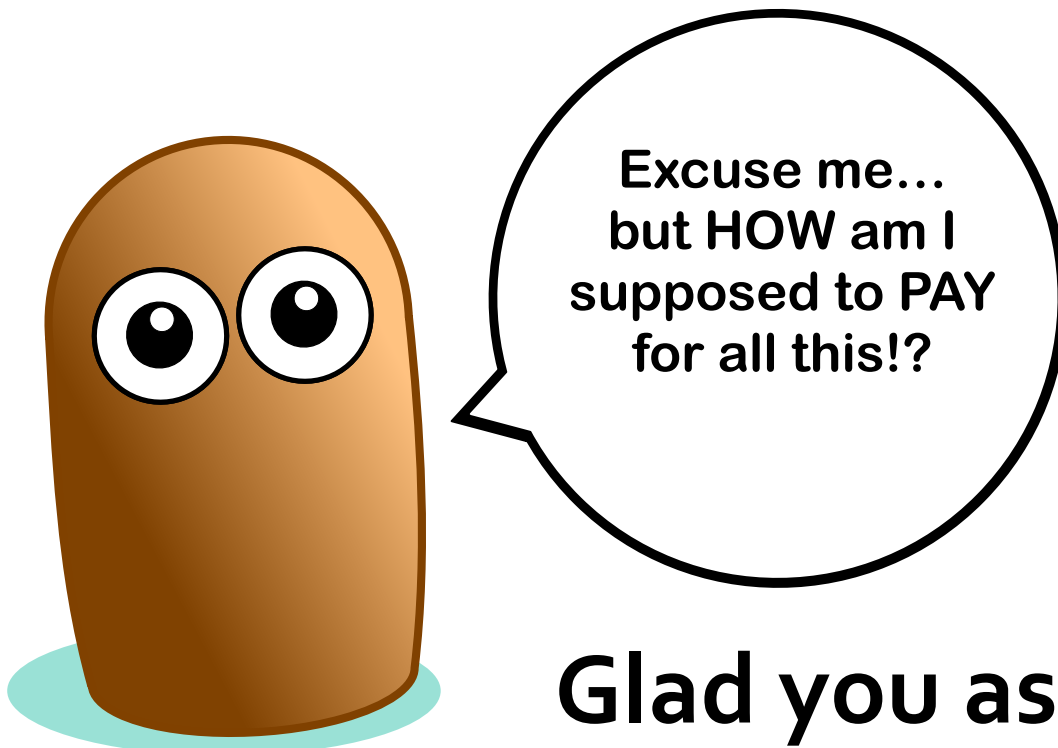
Overnighter • Never had the courage to try this with kiddies but I know people who have with great success. You might try setting up tents in the sanctuary to give it a "camp" feel. Add camp games, camp music, camp props and a BBQ outside to really make it a special event.

Professional Stage Performance •
There is a ton of talent out there for kids to enjoy. Music, puppets, comedy that will light the kids up.

Compassion Child • Many churches are already on this, so you are likely way ahead of me here. Our children's ministry always sponsored a Compassion Child (we had two grow up through my years of ministry). It's a great way to motivate your kids to get involved in giving. Your class can write to your Compassion Child and they will write back. It's an awesome thing to see your kids get involved in the life of someone in a completely different culture.

Our church body is a huge supporter of Compassion International (they love us and have even sent some of our pastors abroad to visit Compassion kids and workers.)

Be sure to take a look at the Compassion International website.



Glad you asked!...

BUDGET

“ By **WISDOM** a house is BUILT,
and by **UNDERSTANDING** it is ESTABLISHED;
by **KNOWLEDGE** the rooms are FILLED
with all precious and pleasant riches. ”

Proverbs 24:3-4, *ESV*

Believe it or not, a miserably **underfunded Children's Ministry budget** can nearly be **the best thing that ever happens to you**. In this article we'll see what that's about, and I'll explain how your ministry can literally end up with more money than you need!

Wait. Why is a bad budget good for me?

There's one principle you need to get into your heart when you combine money with ministry: Money is **ALWAYS** to be used to bless **OTHER** people. If you go by that philosophy, you're gonna do great.

Now, if you start off with all the money you need, the only person who gets blessed is you, because you need no one to help you find the bucks you desperately require. But when you don't have those funds, other people can step in and experience the blessings of giving to an absolutely worthy cause. That's a real thing.

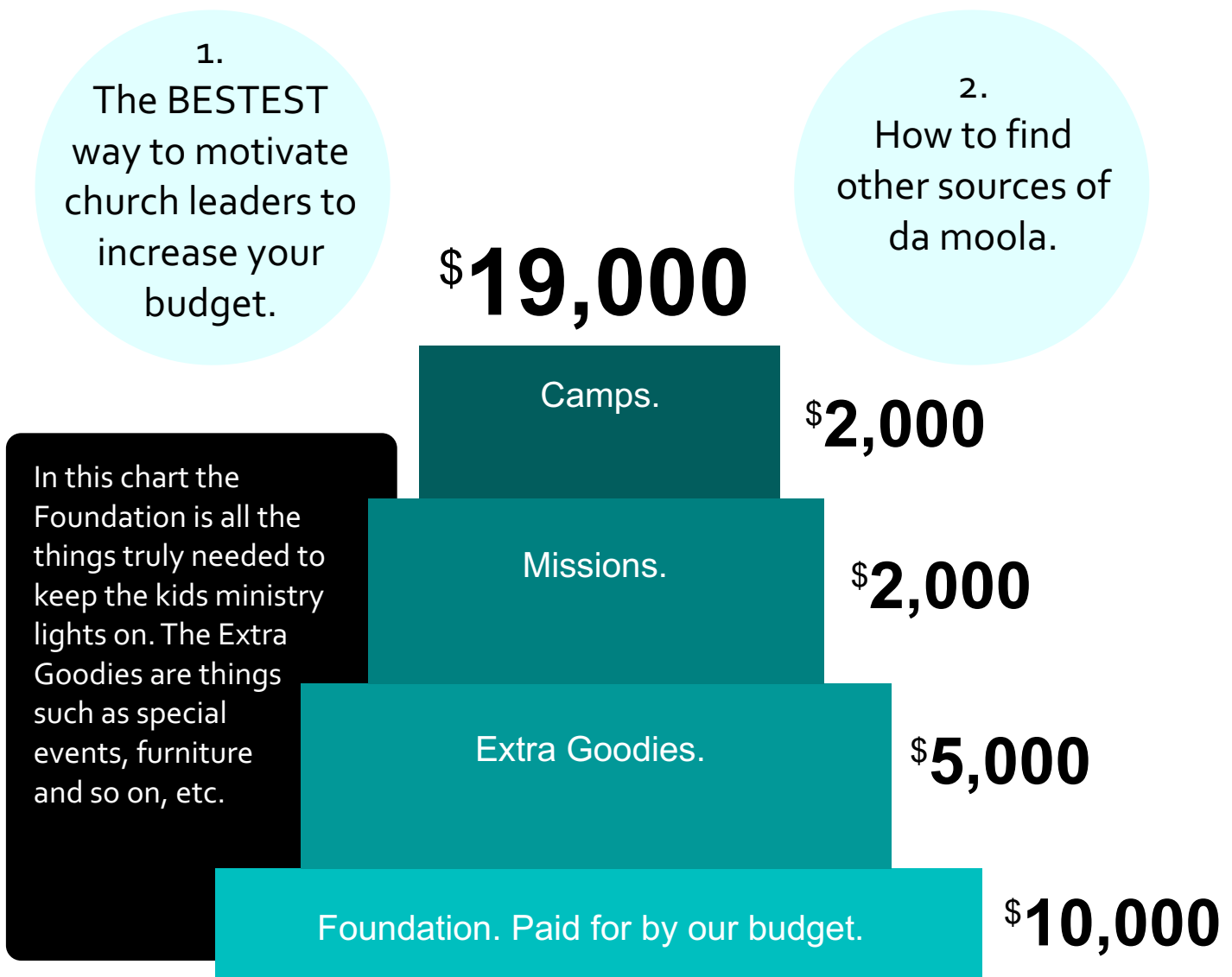
And there's more. Depending on other people for help means that you'll meet great, generous people, learn how to ask for money, and all sorts of good things like that. Also, the joy of seeing God miraculously bring these kinds of people into your life and into your ministry is powerful. And don't forget; your pastor and financial team will love you!

With that in mind, does it surprise you that in 25 years of ministry we never held a fundraiser, all SS collections went to missions and we never charged for anything except camp?

After 25 years as the Children's Pastor of my church, I retired. That last year I had a budget of \$10,000 to pay for all the needs of the kids and families from cradle to fifth grade. We are a medium-size church and the number of kids we could handle was about 125 per week. Doing the math, that meant about \$1.50 per child per week. With that we paid for Bibles, snacks, curriculum, regular midweek events, special trips, flat screens, toys, crafts and all the other stuffs necessary. **It's not possible.**

In that last year I spent about **\$19,000** to cover all the costs. The chart below shows the facts. Almost **twice** the budget! But guess what? At the year-end budget meeting, the financial guy praised me and the rest of the staff applauded. Why? Because, as far as the official books were concerned, I had only gone over the annual budget by **five dollars** (way better than the rest of the gang). The other \$8,995 came from other sources.

And that means we have two things to talk about...



To begin to understand God's hand in money and budgets, let's look at exactly where He raised the income...



As you can see, our foundational needs were paid by the ten grand in the budget. About five grand came as designated giving from people who loved what we were doing for the kids. The Sunday School collection amounted to about two thousand in coins and dollars. Incidentally, it's the teachers who gave most of that. Finally, since camp was the only thing we ever charged for, parents would pay the fee (others would often gift us with money for scholarships).

Notice how much our total pile of cash was impacted by LOVE.

Scholarships paid by people who loved what we were doing. Teachers who contributed because they loved the kids and what we were doing. People from all levels of financial success sacrificing because they loved what GOD was doing via the ministry.

Thus, the BESTEST way

to raise those dollars is to be a person that people (and church leaders) love to support because you've wisely built an awesome program that is building terrific kid-level disciples of the Lord. **Let people see you.**

Remember our Proverbs passage? It tells us what our desire in ministry should be. That's why we are talking about money; we need it to reach our goal.



Proverbs 24:3-4, ESV

By **wisdom** a house is **built**, and by **understanding** it is **established**; by **knowledge** the rooms are **filled** with all precious and pleasant riches.

To us here at Christ's Love And Majesty Ministries, this is the exact description of children's ministry:

BUILD a thriving kids ministry.
ESTABLISH lifelong disciples of Christ.
FILL your heart with God's many blessings.

So, gang, the **job skills** we must develop to become the very best kid ministry leaders are:

WISDOM: Knowing the best steps to reach a goal.
UNDERSTANDING: Choosing the best goal.
KNOWLEDGE: Putting everything into practice to reach your goal.

Thank You!

Thanks so much for reading through the Kids Ministry Toolbox; I hope you found it helpful.

I especially want to thank you for serving God by working with kids! What an awesome calling from our Lord.

Tom Finley

Interested in going deeper? Great! Soon, more is coming...

3 Steps to Lifelong Discipleship!

We have much more on the drawing table! You've just looked through Step 1. We'll let you know when 2 and 3 are ready :)

KIDS MINISTRY TOOLBOX

1

**Level Up Your
Kids Ministry**

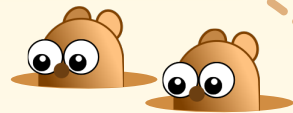


2

**Bring in New Kids
and their Families**

3

**Sunday School
Lessons Designed
to Disciple**



Digging up
treasure in
God's word!

