

## Way of Grace Church's Children's Ministry Priorities

**Vision:** *To call all children to follow one Lord, Jesus Christ, through the forgiveness of the cross, as we follow His call to lovingly nurture each child and encourage their families according to God's word.*

### Distinctives

It is our prayer that the following distinctives are the 'ingredients' that children will always find in our opportunities for ministry.

**Christ-centered/Gospel-centered:** It is our desire to make sure that each child is continually pointed to Jesus Christ in all things<sup>1</sup>. It is very easy to make moral or behavioral principles the goal of our lessons. For example, this difference might be seen in two different treatments of the story of the ten lepers from Luke 17:11-19. If we were simply moralizing, we might teach children that the point of the story is that God always wants us to say "thank you". But while gratefulness is certainly central to the story, Christ is even more central! Gratefulness should always bring us back to the mercy of God in Christ and our need for Christ's healing. The point is not simply to recite a stock gospel presentation every week, but through God's word, to always bring children back to the centrality of Jesus, our desperate need, and responding to His call.

**Word-focused:** We believe that, just as with adults, the word of God is the means by which children can know and grow in Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>. Our desire is not simply to provide childcare services for parents, but to care for their children by sharing with them a grand vision of a great God through His word. Because children can usually grasp a lot more than we give them credit for, it's our desire to instruct all children in God's word in age-appropriate and creative ways. In many cases, children will be studying the same Bible passage that their parents are learning about in the main gathering.

**Assisting parents/Reaching parents:** It is our belief that God's word places the primary responsibility for a child's spiritual training with that child's parents<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, it is important that we see our role as supporting and encouraging the instruction given in the home. We might do this by sending resources home with children that parents can use for follow-up, or through parenting books and classes. We also recognize that not every child comes from a home that is committed to godly instruction. Therefore, it is our prayer that in ministering to a child, we will have opportunities to minister to their families as well.

**Creative and fun:** While our emphasis is not on entertaining and/or amusing children, we do believe that playfulness is part of a child's natural vocabulary. Instead of being distractions, games, crafts, puppets, and other fun mediums can be used to convey the truths of God's word in a memorable and loving way to children.

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<sup>1</sup> *"Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."* (Mark 10:14)

<sup>2</sup> *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* (II Timothy 3:14, 15)

<sup>3</sup> *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7) Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.* (Ephesians 6:4)