

iLIGHT



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Time for Children's Sermon

Children are our greatest joy, care and responsibility. Sometimes it is hard for the church to balance between its mission of leading them to God, and its mission of winning new people. It is hard to make new friends in these days and even harder to see new brothers and sisters in our congregations. For that reason, we work extremely hard for turning our children into Christ's disciples. We could add also that congregations that treat children with respect, are full of life, and have an active, warm and accepting atmosphere.

There is a time during the Sabbath worship when children and adults are together, and share a common "spiritual frequency". This is the time of the Children's Sermon. I have visited dozens of local churches, and I have noticed that the worship is more vivid, more interesting, and the churches are more united and accepting where Children's Sermons function and develop. Within those 10-15 minutes, all people become one, they understand everything they hear from the pulpit, they can express their emotions, and even take part of it.

Why children's sermon?

At first, as I already mentioned, this is a special time dedicated to children when they are "visible" for the whole community. Many churches have special rooms for Children Sabbath School groups, and they are somewhere far from the main chapel, and if there's no Children Sermon, many children and parents chose to remain in those rooms, and communicate among themselves while the rest of the church worships God in the main hall. It is exactly the same in the church where I am a member now.

Second, during the Children's Sermon, children (and their parents) feel special because the Bible truths and Bible texts are preached in a language they understand. Unlike the Children Sabbath School where they learn mainly about Bible heroes, in the Children Sermon they can hear various stories with morals, not exclusively from the Bible. The stories can include personal testimonies of various people, stories about interesting persons, about modern heroes of faith; they can hear about Christian virtues like respecting parents, friends loyalty, obedience, etc.

What do we talk about?

The most powerful narratives probably are the personal testimonies. Long after they have heard some personal story, the children remember it, and talk about it. These stories are a kind of a sharing of mission experience, and are the most attractive ones for the adults, too.

Equally intriguing are the stories about famous persons, about modern heroes of faith, about people who have saved some others' lives, about people giving powerful testimonies, about people of art labouring hard to achieve some success. Sometimes we illustrate these stories with presentations on the screen - pictures or videos of some musical performance if the story is about a famous musician, for instance.

Sometimes, we tell popular fairy-tales the audience is familiar with. The adults and the children finish the storyteller's sentences, take part in moral formulating, and we just add some spiritual truth that could be extracted from the text, and support it with a Bible text.

We often tell stories about animals with hu- ▶

God's Bible Promises for kids

God can do EVERYTHING!
"Is anything too hard for the Lord? No!"
Genesis 18:14

Disappointments will come; they will always be found, but God has a way of turning them around.

"I will change their sadness into happiness. I will give them comfort and joy instead of sadness."

Jeremiah 31:13

from: Daly, R., "God's Little Book of Bible Promises for Children", Autumn House, Grantham, Great Britain, 2000

CARING FOR KIDS



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What do children truly need to grow up happy? To feel that they fit in and matter? To believe that they are loved? They need you—you and other caring adults to genuinely be there for them as they're growing up. They need to know you care, not just on special occasions, but *every day*. How do you do that? By accepting, guiding, and loving them in simple, yet meaningful ways. You don't need a lot of time and money; you don't have to be a parent, teacher, or coach. Sincerely showing children you care can make a difference, helping to bring out the best in them—and in you.

Create a safe, open environment.

Be available.

Cheer their accomplishments.

Encourage them to help others.

Tackle new tasks together.

Believe what they say.

Help them take a stand and stand with them.

Daydream with them.

Do what they like to do.

Make decisions together.

Build something together.

Love them no matter what.

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man characteristics (fables) which rebuke or encourage certain behaviour. We use PowerPoint presentations or videos to illustrate the stories. The children like animal stories very much.

Children's story is indispensable

I have noticed that if there is no children's story, it lacks a very important thing. Here are some reasons:

- Children's stories are colourful and fresh, they bring life to the "solemn" worship.
- Children's stories make the ministry for children visible to the church.
- If they were to be previously synchronized, children's stories could be an excellent introduction of the pastor's sermon.
- After the children's story, the children receive some craft materials, which facilitate the parents, especially, parents of very young children. And the older children have to leave aside their mobile devices.
- Children could take an active part in the narrative, cooperate with the storyteller, read the Bible texts, or answer questions.
- The presence of children creates a warm, informal, friendly atmosphere in the community that could make the adults leave the church warm-hearted and encouraged.
- Every Sabbath, the church members are reminded of how important the children of the church are; that they are the most important mission target group; that prayers for them during the week could pull the families together, and unite the community.

Children take part in children's sermons

If you allow me to use a media cliché, the children's sermon is "the prime time" of the worship. The songs are already sung, the prayers are pronounced, the people feel comfortable in their seats, and are ready to receive spiritual food. At this moment the children's story is announced! In one of the churches I have been a member, they even had a special signal for the children's sermon, a jolly melody. Then all children took

their places in the middle of the chapel in small chairs, or a carpet, or little pillows.

During the children's sermon the children feel prone to express their own opinions, to make comments, or ask questions without being guided by their parents. There are many funny situations, and much laughter, sometimes. This helps the church to turn into a real big family.

Sometimes the children help the teacher to tell the story, and in this way learn how to speak into a microphone, how to be calm before a big audience, and clearly realize that they serve God. They feel encouraged to take decisions about their behaviour, about habit changes, or relationships with other people.

Children's sermon for everybody

I have seen how in churches where the children's sermon has been recently included in the worship, or it is already a favourite part of the worship, the adults look forward to it. They take active parts in comments, answer questions, help the children in their parts. One Sabbath in my church all the teachers who usually told children stories were ill or missing. We decided not to have a children story this Sabbath, moreover the majority of the children were missing, too. After the opening prayer the elder announced that now the pastor would give the sermon. Then one of the old ladies of the church stood up, and exclaimed, "Will we not have a story today?" From this Sabbath on we never had a Sabbath without a children's story. This experience warmed the hearts of all of us. We started to pray to find more people capable to tell children's stories.

If your congregation hasn't developed the tradition of the children's sermon before pastor's sermon, do not hesitate anymore! Find people capable to do it, prepare, and start. I am sure, the good fruit will come up soon. ♦

Virginia Chirpanlieva
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working with children



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JESUS

wants all of me

A Gift from God

What exciting things happened to you yesterday? What wonderful things have already happened today? Do you know how many will still happen? Every day you eat, drink, play, sleep, have fun, and learn a lot of things. This is all God's

plan and will help prepare you for the future. Each day is a gift from God. Remember this and, if your day has been an unpleasant moment or if at some point you have to do something you don't like, your day will be easier.

"God makes everything happen at the right time."

Ecclesiastes 3:11

From: Ferreira de Oliveira, S. *Talking with God*. Editorial Safeliz, Madrid, Spain, 2015

ELISABETH (2 YEARS)

For Christmas, I would like to have a big brother.

From: www.enfandises.com/en/bibliotheque/cat-21-brother/phrase-22017.html

IN SYNERGY

Once upon a time

She closed her eyes for a few short seconds and took a deep breath. It seemed like she just woke up from a bad dream. No, it was not a nightmare. Everything she went through during the last few hours was true. Her body just performed a miracle... she delivered a human. Baby's fingers were so tiny and yet so perfect. Little eyes were wide open. They were wildly searching and looking all across the place. The fact that she just became a mother did not penetrate her mind yet. She was counting the fingers, touching the hair, kissing the little chubby cheeks. She could not stop smiling. This little creature made her smile again and again. Her pain was gone and her heart was stolen forever. When she kissed him again, she kissed the face of God. **The little boy was delivered to deliver her. You. And me.** Her little boy was heaven's perfect Lamb.

Christmas is God's birthday party. Together with family members and friends, we celebrate the fact that the Savior was born to bring the best gift - the gift of Salvation.

Somewhere along with history, this message was lost. Christmas celebration became an obsession of shopping, overeating, topped with flashing lights and gold and red ribbons. Lonely is feeling even more isolated. Poor are feeling pushed to margins of society.

What can I do? Make the best birthday party ever... change the world by the way you celebrate. Celebrate responsibly and with a purpose in mind.

Make your shopping of gifts an oppor-

tunity to give back to the community. Shop responsibly. While Christmas is a time for giving and sharing with your family and friends, it can also be used as an opportunity to give.

Why not buying anything at all? Seriously! Of course, Christmas is usually the time for gifts, but unfortunately, it is also often the time of overconsumption. Many times, we buy things that we are not sure others even need or want, right? Sometimes, giving our time to our loved ones, visiting them, having a meal together and sharing meaningful conversations and experiences can be a great gift too. There are dozens of ways to gratify others without falling into the temptation of overconsumption - why not dare to find out those that'd please your loved ones?

Perhaps your parents could use some help with Christmas cooking, your grandpas would like to share the history of how they've met and your brothers would go crazy if you played sports or sang with them? Give it a real thought! When others feel like you care and realize that you're spending your time with them, that you are truly paying them attention, that will likely bring more happiness than most presents you can give.

The baby boy was born more than 2,000 years ago. He grew up and became



a strong man. A man is stronger than any obstacle or barrier. For the whole year, we were reading about barriers to education for 262 million children across the world. But this Christmas season remembers that there is nothing impossible for Him. The baby is not little anymore. Barriers can be destroyed. Education for all is a new reality. What it takes is a commitment of our faith community to make this world a better place for every single girl and boy. And the first step is to give your voice to those little ones. Sign the petition at <https://inschool.adra.org/petition>.

See also page 15 for QR code.

Maja Ahac
ADRA Eurpoe
Advocacy Coordinator



What is the climate in our church?

Have you ever asked some little children in your church whether they like to come there on Saturdays or not, and why do they feel like this? This is a very important question. While the adult members can decide whether they want to be part of an ecclesiastic community or not, the little children usually have to come with their parents and they simply cannot choose another option until a certain age, although they may not feel comfortable in the church. The answers to questions about how the participants of our worships and activities feel and how they perceive the relationships in our communities can indicate the quality of the social climate of our church – including the little children who are the most sensitive individuals.

Some school classroom climate detection tools typically use sentences that describe positive or negative relationships in a group, and the children assign a score to each sentence based on how much they agree or disagree with the statement. How many points from one to five would you honestly assign to the following statements: "In our congregation everyone is my friend" or "In our congregation everyone is equally appreciated, no one is considered to be better or worse than the others"? The good climate of the school classroom is usually character-

ized also by the fact that there is a lot of fun, and when somebody fails, the others try to help him or her.

The quality of social climate is often verified in classes where some pupils are significantly different from others, and where some pupils with special needs are educated. These pupils are at the biggest risk of segregation or exclusion, which may take the form of "only" overlook or disregard – and it is not far from there to disrupting relationships or even bullying. Would you think there is no such a risk for these children in our church?

The presence of children with special needs in a group of other children can be a real blessing, as it offers an opportunity for education aimed at quality relationships and a positive social climate in the community. We should probably take seriously some good advices of E. G. White, such as these two: "Even the children should be taught a little errands of love and mercy for those less fortunate than themselves."¹



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"Teach your children to be kind and patient. Teach them to be thoughtful of others. Thus you are preparing them for higher ministers in religious affairs."² May God give us the wisdom to let our children experience a social climate similar to that of the God's kingdom even in our church today!

¹ E. G. White, Christian Service, p. 31

² E. G. White, Child Guidance, p. 17



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At every suitable opportunity let the story of Jesus' love be repeated to the children. In every sermon let a little corner be left for their benefit. The servant of Christ may make lasting friends of these little ones. Then let him lose no opportunity of helping them to become more intelligent in a knowledge of the Scriptures. This will do more than we realize to bar the way against Satan's devices.

Child Guidance, p. 552



Have a Strong New Year



Incredi-Biblical

"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Matthew 19:26

According to one American website, these are the 10 most popular resolutions people make at New Year's.

1. Spend more time with family and friends.
2. Get more exercise.
3. Lose weight.
4. Quit smoking.
5. Enjoy life more.
6. Quit drinking.
7. Get out of debt.
8. Learn something new.
9. Help others.

10. Get organized.

Do any of those fit with *your* plans for the new year? If a list were made of the most popular resolutions for teens, what do you think they would be? What about Christian teens? Should Christians have different goals?

Some people make resolutions; some don't. Some keep them; some break them. A New Year's resolution is just one more way of setting a goal for yourself—saying what you'd like to accomplish. If you try to do it on your own, you probably won't succeed. But if you rely on God's strength as He promised through His Holy Spirit, you'll be amazed what you can accomplish in the coming year.

Make your most important resolution: staying close to Jesus. With Him by your side, it'll be a wonderful year.

Info Splat

The tradition of making New Year's resolutions goes as far back as ancient Babylon. The most popular New Year's resolution in ancient Babylon was to return borrowed farm equipment.

React now!

Instead of a list of resolutions, write a prayer letter to God, asking for His help in accomplishing the goals you'd like to reach for yourself in the year ahead. Keep the letter to look back at next New Year's Eve and see how you've grown in your relationship with Him.

From: Bockmann, M. et al.: *Elasti-Brain. 365 Devotions to Stretch your Mind and Shape your Faith*. Review and Herald Publishing Ass., Hagerstown, MD, USA, 2008

SECRETS FROM THE TREASURE CHEST



Why are boys so rowdy? How can they be helped?

– Girl, 12

That's a question women have been asking for centuries.

Members of the male species tend to be more aggressive and "rowdy" across the entire animal kingdom. Physically men are usually stronger, taller, and louder.

As I've mentioned before, the reason for this must be somehow tied into the original plan God had for men as protectors and providers for their female partners. In Eden, these differences didn't cause concern. Man's characteristics were designed by the Creator to interlock perfectly with woman's special characteristics.

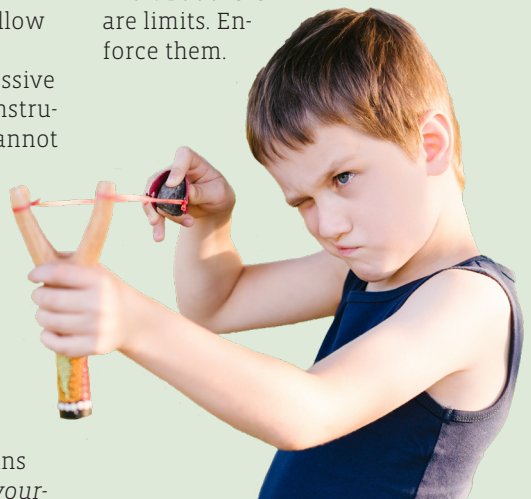
How can boys be helped? I believe, more than anything, they have to be tolerated. They're not about to

change—at least, not quickly.

I'd like to add something very important here. You must never allow a guy's rowdiness to violate your personal space. Boys can be aggressive with footballs, bicycles, musical instruments, and each other. But they cannot be aggressive with you unless you grant permission. You have rights. You are of great value and must be treated with respect at all times. Anyone who crosses the line and allows his rowdiness to damage you or your self-respect is sinning in the eyes of God. You don't have to take it.

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love," says Paul in Romans 12:10. "Honor one another above your-

selves" (NIV). Rowdy, you have to live with. But there are limits. Enforce them.



From: Mills, C.: *Secrets from the Treasure Chest. Questions Kids ask about Life*. Review and Herald Publishing Ass., Hagerstown, MD, USA, 1996

Changing Family Dynamics

Supporting Children Through Family Changes

The Basics

Today's family faces myriad complex challenges. In any given family, there is rarely a time when something is not in flux. But God can use these very family crises to bring families closer together, create bonds that are stronger than before, and heal wounds that have been left untreated for a long time. It's important to know how the changing tides in the family affect the children who are tossed and turned by the waves these changes cause.

Change in the family takes many forms. For one child, change may be the reality of a mother or father leaving the family to serve in the military thousands of miles away, knowing that this parent may not return. For another child, it may be a parent losing a job, forcing the family to move into a smaller home where there will be significantly fewer packages under the Christmas tree. In some children, it may come after just having weathered the storm of a divorce and a stepparent and step-siblings move in. For yet another, it may be an added sibling from an adoption.

No matter the cause, you can help children adapt to these often traumatic and overwhelming changes in the family by offering a constant in their lives: a place of love and long-term spiritual growth.

Care Tips

Because each family change is unique, there really is no one best way to help children through family crises. The good news is there are several things you can do in any major change that will help children move through the initial shock to adaptation and spiritual growth.

- **Practice authenticity.** Children facing change in the family already feel abandoned and unheard, so they are keenly attuned to whether or not others *truly* care. You can help by putting aside other concerns of the moment and focusing on the needs of the child. Actively listen as the child shares feelings, concerns, and even resentment. Spend time together doing what the child likes to do. One-on-one time such as a trip to an ice-cream shop, time at the playground, or throwing a baseball in the park can help a child know you care about him or

her as an individual. Connecting through the child's interests will help you build a relationship the child sees as a constant amid painful change.

- **Tell the truth.** Children have numerous questions as they face family change and crisis: Why? What did I do wrong? What does this mean for me? What's next? While it's tempting to comfort them with pat answers, the best things you can do is admit that you don't know all the answers and be consistently honest. As they struggle through major changes, children will depend on you for consistency and follow-through. It's critical to live up to the promises—even the small ones. If you promise to talk to a child after church, be sure to be available to do so. Every promise you keep, however small, will build a child's trust in you.
- **Accept the child.** When children are going through family crises, let them know that it's OK to be angry and sad. Change is difficult, especially for children who may not grasp the underlying reasons for the change. Allowing children to express their feelings will give them a safe place to talk and be honest.

What not to say

- **"Everyone goes through change. You'll get over it"** This statement can make children feel guilty for the changes the family is facing or the emotions they are experiencing. Your role is to build a foundation of faith, hope, and love.
- **"Don't be so selfish."** Feeling loss for "the way it used to be" is not selfish. These words will only shut the door to honest evaluation of true feelings and remove any possible growth or adapting to the new situation.
- **"Jesus wants us to love everyone."** Children know God wants them to love, but life is tough at times and they need to know it's OK to be honest about their feelings. They need to know Jesus loves them even when they aren't perfect.
- **"You have to forgive."** In time they will. But right now they need some comfort and understanding. They need to be allowed to express what's on their

hearts. Once they're secure in God's love and your acceptance, then they will feel the freedom to forgive the changes that have been forced upon them.

- **"If you pray, God will make it go away."** This is a promise you can't deliver. It's true that God answers prayer. But the pain seldom just "goes away." If a child is told that all he or she has to do is ask God to take away the pain, and it doesn't happen, what will happen to the hope and faith he or she had developed up to that point? Don't promise a child something that human beings don't have the ability to deliver.

What to say

- **"It's OK to feel ____."** Validating and accepting a child's feelings during times of change in the family is extremely important. The child needs to know that it's OK to be angry, sad, or frightened, and that he or she won't be judged for those feelings. The more a child realizes he or she can share true feelings, the less overwhelming those emotions become.
- **"I'm here for you."** Knowing children can come to you and be honest about the pain they are experiencing is such a gift. Knowing they can be real without being judged allows them to face the realities of their situation and to take courage that they can go on.
- **"I'd like to pray."** We belong to a big God. One who is able to hear our complaints and to strengthen and grow us through the change process. Always pray with the child as well as telling the child you will continue to pray for him or her. This gives the opportunity for you to model how to bring our deepest and most real feelings to a God who can do something about them.
- **"I care about you."** This shows that you offer a constant loving relationship the child can rely on. Despite how scared or angry a child may feel, he or she can always know that your love is always there, no matter what the future may hold.





"Daddy, tell me a story!"—The Benefits of the Evening Story

When my two children were little, they loved to hear a story before sleeping, and I couldn't miss it. It was their favorite time of the day with me and I admit I liked it, too. I was doing my best to get ready for that, reading books of bedtime stories and... the connection was made.

At times, I was back home late and didn't have time to prepare properly, so with some imagination I did present a "new" story by changing some characters and actions.

However, as time passed by, I realized that the stories, although pretty fascinating, were all set with almost the same pattern. Although repetitions are ideal to foster children's imagination, there is a limit that should still be recognized, to avoid disabling the precious connection established between parents and children.

So, I invented my own original way to keep the attention of my children every evening. I began retelling their day but changing the names of the heroes and adapting some of their actions. They were anxiously looking forward to that special time to hear the adventures of Francis and Alexander, totally invented names.

My wife was agreeably amused, because I found a good way for never running out of stories. Of course, she was supposed to share with me the most important events and details of the day, and then... I had just to let imagination run wild.

Thirty years passed by, and I still keep clearly in my mind those two little charmed faces looking at me, yearning to know the beautiful adventures experienced by their virtual friends. Some evenings I was tired, the day had been exhausting, but for nothing in the world I would have missed that wonderful opportunity to see them clinging to my words.

This gimmick lasted for pretty long time. But one evening, after the umpteenth adventure told along the lines of their day, and by sharing a detail experienced by the little heroes, my youngest child gets up from bed and says: "No, ... he didn't do that!" ... and he adjusted the story accordingly. Got me!! And who knows since how long... But I won them over and they wouldn't have told me if it wasn't for my mistake.

In any case, it lasted a little longer, until age gave way to reality, and a straight "good night" was enough to fall asleep.

A few days ago, I was listening to a radio broadcast on the concern generated by the more and more spreading practice that allows children to fall asleep watching something on a smartphone or tablet. The questioned experts focused on the need for children to listen to a story before falling asleep, rather than passively watching it. It is a practice that trains their imagination and helps them to enrich imagination.

Unfortunately, in many cases, the tendency of "seeing" rather than "listening" is taking place, a pattern that engenders presumable consequences. To counteract such condition, the experts suggested an option from the digital world, by providing a series of podcasts stories that children could listen to and continue to train their imagination. What shall we say? Personally, I believe that this tool is better than having children falling asleep with extraordinary images in their eyes, in some cases even not very beneficial. But I still wonder, is it actually needed to replace the warm voice of the father with the metallic voice of an unknown teller? Let's think about it. Nothing can replace the priceless human contact, especially with one's own children.

CREATIVE WORSHIP IDEAS FOR BUSY FAMILIES

God's Hats

Bible Connection

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are" (1 John 3:1).

Things you need:

Lots of different hats, or pictures of hats, illustrating some of God's roles

- A firefighter's hat—we can call on God in emergencies
- A policeman's hat—He keeps us safe and shows us the way to go
- An old-fashioned hat—God has always been there, and He never goes out of fashion
- A construction worker's helmet—God is preparing a place for us in heaven
- A judge's wig—God is the most merciful judge ever!
- A Santa Claus hat—God is much, much better than Santa! He gives us

good gifts, whether we deserve them or not, every day of the year!

- A foreign hat—God cares for everyone all over the world
- A crown—God is our King
- A hat that your children know as "Dad's hat"—hide this until you need it

Worship activities

1. Show your children the different hats you've collected.
2. Talk about the different "hats" you wear as parents and the various responsibilities you have, besides being a mom or dad.
3. Look at each hat in turn and talk about God's work as a builder, a firefighter, a merciful judge, etc.
4. Now show the "Dad's hat." Ask your children how it reminds you of God's special work, the work He enjoys the most.



5. Read the Bible verse and think about what it means to be children of God. Talk about the special ways God has lavished His love on you in the past week.

Prayer

Pick up each hat in turn and thank God for doing the role that it represents. Pray the Lord's Prayer together. Make up actions to accompany the phrases, to add a fresh dimension to this familiar prayer.

Experiment #10: Fire on your Hand

This is a very spectacular experiment that can be used to illustrate that if we trust God we can do extraordinary things.

Materials: Wide plastic container, dish soap, small butane gas canister (refill for lighters), lighter, water, kitchen paper (for cleaning), fire extinguisher.

Time: 5 minutes

Safety warnings: 1) This experiment uses fire so it should be performed at safe distance from children and following appropriate safety precautions. 2) Have a working fire extinguisher handy. 3) After using the butane gas canister, move it away from the experiment area. 4) Do this experiment only with people who are not afraid and are willing and capable to follow your instructions to the letter.

Values: Trust in God's plan for your life, even if they seem impossible or crazy.

Procedure (preparation):

1. For this experiment you need the cooperation of another adult, preferably a good friend or a relative. Warn the person about the experiment and, if possible, try it in advance with him or her.
2. Ask your audience: *What would you do if you are walking on the street and a complete stranger comes to you and tells you: Do you allow me to light a fire on your hand? Most people will likely say that they would never allow that. Then say: I agree, nobody would allow a stranger to ignite their hand because that is crazy. However, in the Bible, there are many stories where people were asked to do crazy things, and they did them. Think about Abraham, he was told to take his family and everything he had, leave their house and town, and start walking towards an unknown destination. Or Moses, he was told to go to pharaoh, the powerful king of Egypt, and tell him to release his slaves. Wasn't that crazy? Abraham and Moses, and many other Bible characters, did these crazy things because He who asked them was not a stranger, it was God, whom they knew and trusted.*
3. *They knew God loved them and would take care of them, so they were courageous and did things that they did not understand, because God told them so.*
4. Keep explaining: *Now we are going to do an experiment of trust. I will ask my friend/spouse/son/sister*



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_____ to come here and trust that I can light a fire on his/her hand with no harm. Wait for the person to come and tell him/her: Now, I will light a fire on your hand but the flame will not burn you. Do you trust me? For this to work well you have to follow my instructions. You will feel the heat but your skin will not get burnt. As soon as you feel to much heat you can extinguish the flame by closing your hand fast into a fist.

5. Start the actual experiment:
 - Pour water in the plastic container, enough to cover a hand flat on the bottom.
 - Pour some dish soap into the water.
 - Ask the person to roll up one sleeve and submerge the hand into the water getting it well soaked. IMPORTANT: No objects on the hand or lower arm (watch, rings, bracelets, etc.)
 - Dip the butane canister into the soapy water and give it a spray while submerged. The mixture should bubble up.
 - Put the butane gas canister away (far from the experiment area).

- Ask the person to take some bubbles on the palm of his/her wet hand.
 - Remind the person that the flame can be extinguished by closing the hand quickly.
 - Light the lighter and approach the flame to the bubbles. A big flame will form (the size of the flame depends on the amount of bubbles taken).
6. Tell the audience the conclusion: *If we trust God and follow His instructions, we can do extraordinary things.*

The Science Behind the Experiment:

The bubbles contain butane, a very flammable gas but the ignition is very fast and the soapy water protects the skin from burning.

Noemi Duran

Geoscience Research Institute
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TURBOCHARGE

your Children's Ministry

When Kids Pray

It's awesome to hear kids pray. You can hear their simple faith and feel their sincerity as they reach toward God. What ever you do, teach kids to pray. Give them opportunity to pray. And when they pray, you will see God move.

Let me tell you a story.

In the early '90s, I served a new church plant in California. Being a new church, we didn't have a lot of money for salaries, so we had to rent a house in a neighborhood that was less than desirable. A few doors down lived the meanest man in the neighborhood. He was an ex-gang member and had a history of violence and criminal activities such as drug dealing. I went down to invite him to church, and he quickly told me that he has never been to church, was an atheist, and wanted no part of God. I invited him several times, but to no avail.

A few months later, I noticed two boys walking by my house. I stopped them and invited them to church. One was in fourth grade and one was in fifth grade. They said they had never been to church but would like to go. I told them we would need their parents' permission of they wanted to go. I asked who their father was, and guess where they pointed... you got it... the ex-gang member. Oh

boy... here we go. He'll probably say no, but let's give it a try. To my surprise, he said the boys could go if they wanted to, but he quickly reminded me that he personally wanted no part of church or God.

The boys began attending church with our family. We would drive down and them up every Sunday morning. After several months, they both stepped across the line of faith and became Christ-followers. We began to pray together for their parents to step across the line of faith as well.

One day after class I was cleaning up and notices a piece of paper on the floor. The boys' class had written out prayer requests that day on slips of paper. This piece of paper was the neighbor boys' prayer request slip. It simply read "We prayed seven times this week that our father would accept Jesus into his life."

I stuck the paper in my pocket and when I dropped the boys off, I handed it to their father. I said, "You might want to read this." He had been drinking heavily that day. He grabbed the paper out of my hand, mumbled something, and stumbled back in the house.

The next weekend I went to pick up the boys. Normally they ran out to the car, but this time the

door didn't open. I went up and knocked. One of the boys stuck his head out the door and said they wouldn't be riding with me. My heart sank. I must have made their father so mad that he wasn't going to let them come anymore. But then the boy went on. He said, "We're going to ride with our father today!" I couldn't believe it!

Their father walked in church that Sunday for the first time. We had an L.A. County Sheriff who was familiar with his past crime history. The sheriff approached us and said he would be watching the man carefully in case he tried to steal something.

I was leading the children's worship that day for grades 1-3 After the service, those two boys came running to me They were yelling out, "Dad accepted Christ! Dad accepted Christ!" Their father had walked forward and given his life to Christ at the end of the service! My heart exploded with joy! We hugged, cried, and jumped up and down!

Their mother also gave her life to Christ a short time later. Their father went on to become a minister and has personally brought hundreds of people to Christ.

Prayer made all the difference in that family's life, and it can do the same for families you know!

From: Hudson, D. & Werner, S.: *100 Best Ideas to Turbocharge your Children's Ministry*. Group Publishing, Loveland, Colorado, USA, 2013

WAYS TO PARENT HAPPY CHILDREN

Happy and confident: Skills for life (3)

Match the skill to the child's ability and interest

Of course, you won't be teaching your 4-year-old how to change a tyre or unblock a drain! You need to make sure the child has the physical ability, strength, dexterity, and thinking skills to learn the new task well. It also helps if they are interested in learning how to do it, and if they've seen you do it before.

Here are a few skills you can teach your children at different ages. The ages are only guidelines—some children will manage these tasks a year or two earlier, or later, than others.

Age 2

- Put their shoes away.
- Put toys into a box.

Age 3

- Make their bed.
- Put dirty laundry in the laundry basket.

Age 4

- Sweep the floor.
- Collect the waste-paper baskets.

Age 5

- Dust low surfaces.
- Make emergency phone calls.

Age 6

- Wash and dry dishes and put them away.
- Make a sandwich.

Age 7

- Use a vacuum cleaner.
- Water and weed the garden

Age 8

- Peel and prepare fruits and vegetables.
- Learn a useful and creative hobby.

Age 9

- Count money and give correct change.
- Learn how to finish a task by a given deadline.

Age 10

- Understand the safe use of medicines.



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- Learn to use a penknife, tools, electrical appliances, and sewing machine.

Age 11

- Follow a recipe and bake a cake.
- Wash the car.

Ages 12-15

- Perform basic first aid and resuscitation.
- Manage a whole day's workload efficiently.

Ages 16-18

- Prepare for an interview.
- Learn to drive.

From: Holford K.: *52 Ways to Parent Happy Children*. Autumn House Publications, Grantham, Lincolnshire, UK, 2016



ACTIVITY REPORT



News of the Bulgarian Union

Created with Love

Inspired by Messy Church Concept, a group of volunteers, together with the Children's Ministry Department of the Bulgarian Union, organise family celebrations on a quarterly basis, reaching out to children and parents outside the Adventist community. These are thematic events or events related to big Christian celebrations (Easter, Christmas, etc.). Over 50 families outside the church (and a total of 100 children age 4-12) visit the festive events. These events are an opportunity to connect God to the people in a very unobtrusive way. When planning the events, the organizers put their efforts as to create it for those people who have not yet heard God's message in their lives. They work hard months in advance to prepare it – topic of the event, logistics, décor, scenario, characters, craft materials, activities, and gifts.

The event is attended by families with children who have received a personal invitation from Adventist families or friends. The event is a great opportunity to invite friends and family outside the church, those from our children's

kindergartens or school, or neighbours, who have not been yet familiar with the church community.

When the day and hour come and the people invited arrive, it all begins to happen. Parents and children are real guests to the event – they are not required to bring or prepare anything. They are invited to celebrate and to detach from their every-day life, to receive peace, joy and relief. Here they take part together with their children into something creative, significant, something improving their being, releasing them from bad habits. Here they get a glimpse of God in a very natural way.

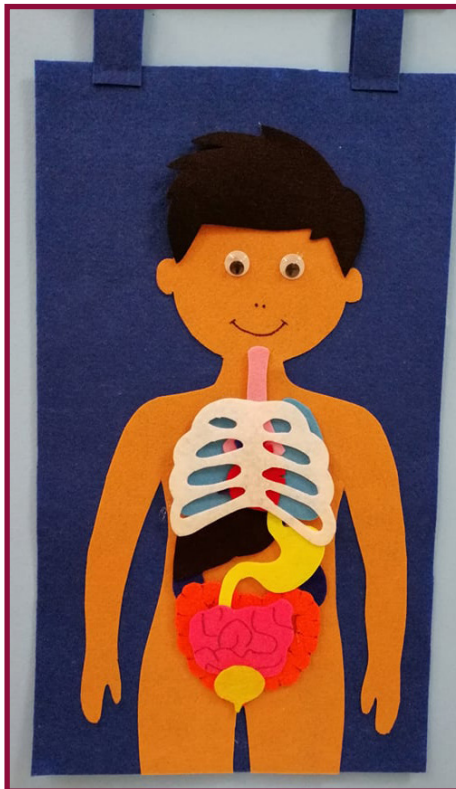
“Created with Love” event was a wonderful opportunity to connect God to the people as their Creator. It was an event focused on the human body and how it functions. Guests were greeted at the entrance, invited to register where they are put into colour-marked teams of 8-10 children with parents. All children were given a name badge and a bag to put in their hand-made crafts at the end. Children went through different stations where they fulfilled a task, watched an experiment or created a craft related to

the human body part presented – brain, heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, etc. Parents accompanied their children all the way through and therefore were able to strengthen their own relationships with them while learning and doing something together.

Here in Sofia, having these family celebrations has become a tradition and parents and children alike are expecting them with great interest. Every time they come because they already know that their children will learn something new and interesting and will acquire different skills. It is also a social event for the parents to meet with others, for children to create long-lasting friendships and for volunteers to minister by serving.

These special family events are real missionary work with a long-lasting impact, connecting people from different backgrounds together and allowing us to share our faith in practice.

Theodora Tsvetanova
Bulgarian Union
Lay Member
working with children





ACTIVITY REPORT



News of the Bulgarian Union

On the path of the unusual star

On December 16, 2019 we had a children's holiday in Sofia. Such events have been a tradition since 2014.

By tradition, a total of 98 children came to the holiday, led by their parents, relatives or friends. Of these, 33 children are guests, people not attending church. The team that prepares the program is almost permanent and consists of 15 people, including pastors and pastors' wives.

The main purpose of the children's holidays is to bring families from the capital to an event for the whole family. Connecting families and children in a friendly way is the basis for building a good community.

The theme of the last holiday was related to Christmas. We were preparing a

puppet play "On the Road of the Unusual Star". The heroes in it were the wise men of the East who realized that the innermost, deepest, and most personal decision was to worship Jesus who was born. And that the most meaningful life is to give the most valuable to God. With beautiful decor, attractive dolls and strong emotion, the children were captivated by the Bible story.

In addition to the children's theatre, there was a workshop for making cards that contained a Bible passage related to the history of the wise men. The card was three-dimensional and was a stand for a decorative lamp. While making their cards, the children decided about whom to make a gift and tell the story they had heard.

And this time the feedback from the

parents was filled with gratitude and recognition.

"Thanks to Warta and the whole team who created this extraordinary Christmas celebration! It was a delight for both parents and children to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of one of the great Christian holidays. Professionally organized and served in an intriguing, captivating and memorable way, the show thrilled us and touched us strongly! As always, everything was refined to the last detail and filled with desire and enthusiasm by the participants," shares Lalka Laskova, mother of two children.

Theodora Nikolova
Bulgarian Union
Lay Member
working with children





ACTIVITY REPORT



News of the Bulgarian Union

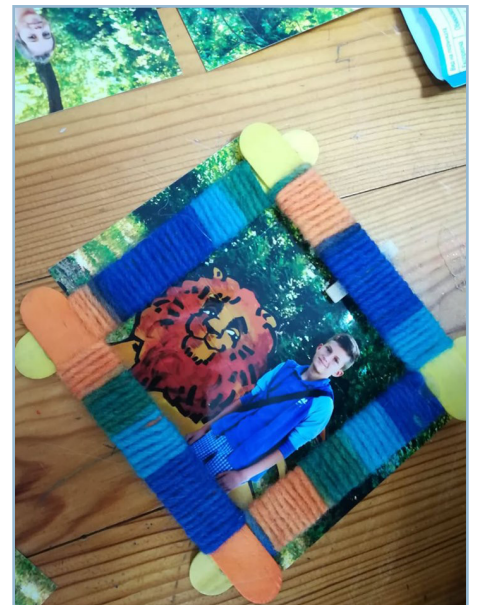
Children Conference

The children in Bulgaria had their Children Conference once again this year. Its slogan was, "Powerful With God". 120 children made a trip to the capital city of the ancient Babylon; they were tourists in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, and they found out that:

1. ... the king was the only lord, and all people on his territory belonged to him.
2. ... no one could have a name but the name they were given by the king.
3. ... all captive people had to forget about their homelands and families, and had to serve only the king.
4. ... it was forbidden to worship any other gods but only the ones who were recognized by the king.

But then the children met Daniel and his friends who worshiped the only true God. For that reason they were thrown into the fire furnace. Then the children understood that if they trusted the real God, GOD IS WITH YOU could help them even if their teeth were chattering with fear. They saw how brave was Daniel in a foreign unfriendly land, how good was he in his palace work; they saw as well what a big problem he faced. But God was with him, and helped him to solve it because:

When you feel alone, surrounded by hungry lions, GOD IS WITH YOU!





ACTIVITY REPORT



News of the Bulgarian Union

"Create Future"

The Social Centre "Create Future" was initiated about two years ago from members of the Sofia West SDA Church. Most activities of the centre are inspired by the work of the families within the Church and target parents, children, people who wish to live a healthy lifestyle, people from the local community. We try to have an event at least once a week and to keep our target group interested through our Facebook page. The activities for children and their parents include: art workshops, culinary classes, seminars on successful

parenting, health expo for children and workshops on health issues, Charitable concerts and events supporting charitable causes, ecological initiatives such as planting trees and flowers on designated by the local Municipality Territory, free math lessons, etc.

This initiative fulfils more than just reaching out to the local community members and working in collaboration with the Municipality. It has a very important added value for the church members and especially for the youth and the children who do not only benefit from the activities but also support them

with their participation.

We aim to reach out to more people in 2020 and to involvement other interesting and useful projects and activities through the work of the Centre. Our long-term goal is to have our own building where many more activities could take place and we could be of real benefit to the community. The population of the local Municipality is about 200,000 people and it is one of the growing ones. We are truly blessed to be able to begin our work there and we trust God that He will add on our faith.





ACTIVITY REPORT



News of the Bulgarian Union

Superheroes in Pazardjik

In 2015, we started Adventurer club in Pazardjik. Two years later, we decided to expand our influence and rented a hall in the town. There we worked with 9-10 kids. In 2018, our club became part of Born for Adventures. That club has huge influence in the community due to the way of work they were applying. So we applied their approach, and experience.

This year (starting from September), our club is working with about 20 kids from the community and their number is gradually growing.

In the beginning, there were... the superheroes. Superman, Batman, Captain America, Spiderman, The Flash, Hulk, Thor, Wonder Woman and Aquaman were main heroes in the festival organized for the entire town (about 70,000 residents). There we organized different exciting

games: Flight facility, rope pulling, target shooting, water pool cleaning, running, hammer striking, whip handling, and more.

In our regular gatherings, in good weather we are always outside in parks where children play and learn about nature. We had meetings with modern-day heroes - to get to know the firefighter and police profession more closely. At a special meeting, we were introduced to the activities of people from our local history who were spiritual enlighteners for the people in difficult times. Together with other volunteers, we sowed seeds of trees with the desire that each child try to grow and plant a tree. We had a special meeting on ecology and how each of us could be a super hero in protecting the environment through separate waste collection.

Part of our work is organizing events

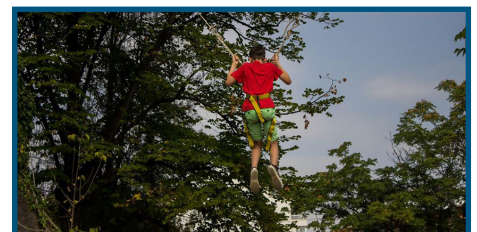
for children in institutions. In the beginning of December, we were invited by an association of Bulgarian mothers to organize games for disadvantaged children in the village of Lisichevo.

For Christmas, we had a special event at which some of the children first heard the true story, as recorded in the Bible, after which each child had the opportunity to create something to commemorate the event.

Meetings with a medical specialist and mountain rescue are forthcoming.

We strive to nurture children's love for nature and the community in which we live.

Vladimir Krumov
Bulgarian Union
Lay Member
working with children





ACTIVITY REPORT



News of the Bulgarian Union



Keep in Mind

EVENTS FROM THE INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION

2020



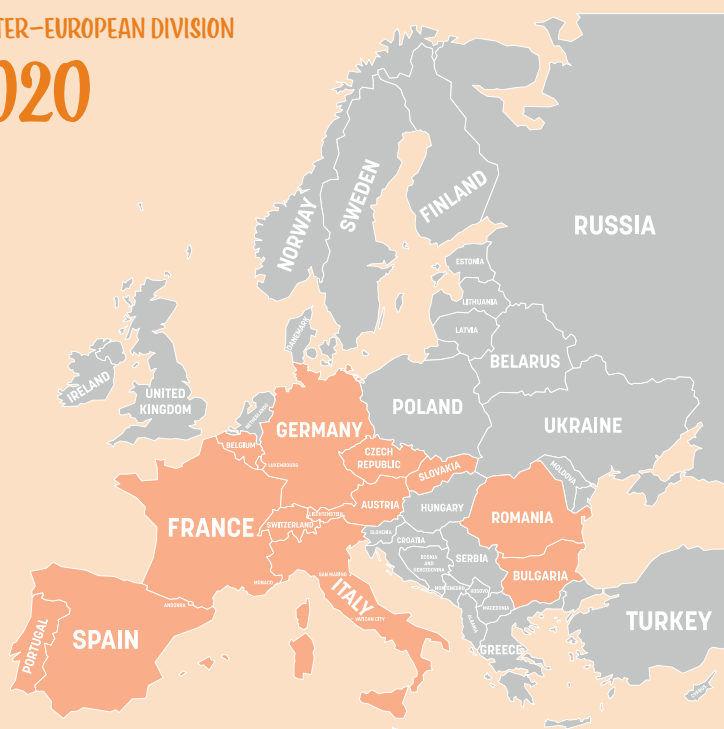
January 25

"Signature Day"

ADRA Special Day for Global Education

Material can be found here: <https://cloud.eud.adventist.org/index.php/s/NfpcqjKkCi9kiz>

HELP US GET TO 1 MILLION SIGNATURES



The Importance of Generational Connections (2)

Continuation of the last issue.

There is a growing body of research, initially from the States but also more recently from the UK and Australia, that churches experience real benefits where individuals of different ages are brought together intentionally for teaching, worship and service. It strengthens the sense of unity in a church, enriches the spiritual learning and is a great opportunity for Christian character formation through mentoring. There is also evidence, in particularly from recent research carried out in the UK into Family Ministry, that intergenerational churches are better placed to help troubled families, addressing loneliness and modelling a way of life that challenges society's tendency to fragment families. (...)

All this suggests that if we want to see the Christian faith caught and nurtured today the young need to be alongside the old so they can hear and learn from those with experience of what it means to trust God in all the ups and downs of life. Likewise the old also need to be alongside the young who can bring the gift of a lively questioning spirituality and an eager sense of wonder; and Chris-

tians of whatever age who have a mature faith need to be alongside beginners of whatever age to help them explore new ways of seeing life and encountering God. (...)

Messy Church has been particularly inspiring in this regard, as long as it is seen not as a technique for getting more people into 'Sunday church' but rather as a place where people can become Christian together in a congregation in its own right. It is not uncommon for example in congregations who have adopted the Messy Church approach to find that older adult participants become, at least for the two hours of the service, honorary grandparents to the young children they encounter, who both give and receive around the activity tables, during the celebration and over the meal together. (...)

In so many ways all this is simply a recovery of a Biblical vision of faith sharing and faith nurture. When we look back into the Old and New Testaments we discover that discipleship and service were learned and expressed both in family celebrations at home and in religious festivals at which all ages participated. (...)

I cannot imagine how I can continue to grow in Christ without the presence of children and young people to stimulate and challenge me, nor without the presence of older generations with their stories of a faith that has stood the test. (...)

This bringing together of the generations goes against the culture of some urban and suburban churches, and these churches need reminding that church at its best is one of the few social gatherings. (...) A healthy church community is therefore one that embraces all-age diversity and celebrates God-given differences; is one where there is the dynamic of encounter of like and unlike which is the recipe for healthy Christian growth. (...)

The perspectives of someone who has lived through war in the past century or the sexual revolution of the 1960s compared with that of a young person who is a 21st century digital native may be very different, but each undoubtedly needs the other to enrich both lives for good and most assuredly for each to grow as fruitful disciples of Jesus.

by Martyn Payne
The BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship)
Messy Church team.

Excerpt from: <https://faithfullgeneration.com/231-2/>

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



PARENTING TEENS

Nancy Van Pelt

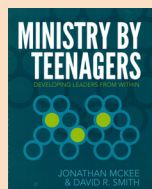
The media overflows with statistics on juvenile crime, delinquency, teen pregnancy and drug abuse. Teens today definitely differ from the teens of twenty or thirty years ago. Find out how to navigate these difficult years the right way.



BIBLE CHALLENGE & BIBLE CHALLENGE JUNIOR

Card Games

Build and test your Bible Knowledge with these fun and informative question-based card game. Earn points as you answer, or CHALLENGE, your family and friends. Check answers in your own Bible, helping you to navigate God's Word with ease and confidence. Be a BLESSING by donating points to other players. BIBLE CHALLENGE JUNIOR is especially designed for children.



MINISTRY BY TEENAGERS

Jonathan McKee & David R. Smith

Are we really making disciples, or are we just making a lot of root beer floats? That's one of the many questions asked and answered in this book—a comprehensive guide offering practical ideas and a detailed "how to" for developing teenage leaders with a passion for ministry. The authors provide strategies to help youth workers—from pastors to volunteers—build a foundation for ministry-driven youth groups.



SOLOMIN'S HEART

Karen Collum

This book wants to be a tool that helps you talk and share moments and thoughts with your children or students on relevant topics. This section consists of a guide with additional questions and activities for each chapter that go deeper into the ideas of the book, and that offer opportunities to reflect together and to search for practical applications.



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