

PHILOSOPHY OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

TOPIC: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHING CHILDREN

Lesson Objectives:

1. At the end of the lesson the teachers should be able to understand God's plan for children's ministries.
2. They should be able to know how to develop a God-centered children's ministry that is reproductive.
3. They should be able to know how to set goals for children discipleship.
4. They should be able to internalize the method of discipleship Jesus used.

Introduction.

We live in the globe that has approximately 6 billion people living in it, and of the 6 billion people, 2 billion are children under the age of 14. That is almost 1/3 of the earth's population. Therefore, if we look at children today what do people think about children? Some parents look at children as an investment. What do I mean? If I educate my son and he starts working, he has to pay back what I have invested in him. Or, if it is a girl and someone wants to marry her, before any transactions of marriage, we look at how much we have invested in her education from grade one to university or college and that becomes a base for charging a young man. In African culture, children are a source of pride in our societies. If a child is sick in our homes it becomes a source of worry and we try all we can to make sure we find the right medicine or doctor to save the life of an innocent child. What about God? What does He say about children? If we understand God's view on children, it will help us know how to invest spiritually in the lives of our children.

- A. Children are a heritage from the Lord- Psalm 127:3
- B. Children are a source of happiness and joy to a family – Jeremiah 20:15
- C. God desires that children know him personally- Isaiah 54:13
- D. God's desires the salvation of the little ones -Matthew 18:14
- E. God desires that children worship him- 2 Chronicles 31:16
- F. Children are lost spiritually – Matthew 18:11-14

King David had a purpose for his son. It was not that he should have riches when he grew up or that he would have a better education and a better job; rather, he desired that his son would serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

1 Chronicles 28:9 –

“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.”

I believe this is God's plan for children even today, that they grow to know Him personally as their Redeemer and Savior of their souls and then learn to serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind. But before we go any further we need to have a Biblical purpose in our ministries that will enable us by God's grace to have children who will grow to serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind. In order to fulfill these purposes, we need to have objectives in our Sunday Schools such as:

1. We should lead children to a personal knowledge of Christ as their true Savior
2. We should prepare children spiritually by instilling in them a love for the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father, and His Holy Spirit and a personal sense of responsibility.
3. To prepare children to serve God effectively
4. To develop a sense of responsibility in each child as a Christian and a citizen.

In order to fulfill all these objectives we need to develop a discipleship plan that will have set goals that will point Children in that direction.

"We are constantly on a stretch if not a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the Gospel... Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men." (E.M. Bounds)

In order to have this plan we need to look to Jesus to see how he called, prepared, and trained his disciples. I believe this is the very method and plan we should use.

- A. Jesus' method was personal- He invited His disciples to spend time with Him personally. And the application for this to children is that we should know our Sunday school children personally, invite them to your home if possible or spend time with them at their homes if that is convenient. The goal for this is salvation. You share the Gospel message with them and maybe spend time with them after the service to ask them questions about their personal life, questions such as, "How is school? Which subject do you enjoy? How many are you in your family? What church does your dad and mom attend? What would you like me to be praying for you about?"
- B. Jesus' method was individual – You have to be sensitive. There are some children whom you have to ask if they are saved. Don't always wait for decisions after your lesson.
- C. Jesus' method was relational- Jesus took his disciples, taught them, and grounded them in the faith. That is when he delegated them service.

"Jesus did not use men to build his ministry; he used a ministry to build men"
Personal Discipleship – Philip Hunt- pg 11.

Many times we rejoice, which we should, when we see great numbers receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, especially in children's camps, Jungle clubs, and other children's ministries. We give testimonies, which we should, and we think this is the end:

let us plan for next year's camp. But, we forget about those who got saved this year. This was not Jesus' method of discipleship.

JESUS' METHOD OF PREPARATION:

1. One method Jesus used to prepare his disciples was to allow them hear His teaching in the synagogues and see healing in Galilee (Matthew 4: 23-25). The teaching was not only for the disciples but for everyone.

One way we can prepare our children in the process of discipleship is to encourage them to come for lessons to hear Bible teaching. Let them hear prayer for them in class by name, if the class is small. This will show them that you care. Get prayer request from them and ask them, "Mary, how can I pray for you?" "John, what do you want me to pray for?"

2. He prepared his disciples by allowing them to observe Him performing miracles so that they could see His authority over sickness, for example, in healing a man with leprosy (Matthew 8:2).

I know we don't have to do miracles for children to observe as Jesus did, but we should allow them observe us how we pray. If it is prayer we are doing, let them observe us. The best thing would be to tell them in advance that the one who will observe what I will be doing will be rewarded.

3. The other method He used to prepare His disciples was by association. There were lessons He wanted them to learn as they followed Him (Matthew 8: 23- 27). He wanted to teach them about faith, that His presence meant a lot in times of storms, and that was all they needed.
 - a) Association involved an initial encounter -- Matthew 9:9
 - b) They took trips together in different cities -- Matthew 15:21;15:29
 - c) They walked together to Galilee – Matthew 19:1
 - d) He was very open with them and shared His program to Jerusalem – Matthew 20:17-19
 - e) They were with Him even at the last minute at the Passover – Matthew 26:17-18
 - f) They were with Him in the garden of Gethsemane praying – Matthew 26: 36
 - g) Jesus accompanied Him after the resurrection – Matthew 28: 16-17

So should it be with children, you may arrange a trip with children to go in the compound with them to evangelize other children or retreats with children to Mindolo dam, if money can allow. You should remember that the goal of discipleship is reproduction, and what you are doing is the very thing they will be doing when their turn comes to do the same to others. It is not God's plan for children just to stop after making a decision of salvation. God wants that child to grow and mature and reproduce spiritually. This is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). The command is to make disciples of all nations that is not just adults who should be disciples of Jesus Christ but children too. Someone once said, "85% of people get saved between ages 5-14. This is the best soul winning ground you can find and have a part in it." This should not be the only goal in Sunday School but to bring

children to full maturity. Ephesians 4:14: *“That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...”*

JESUS’ METHOD OF TRAINING WAS DEMONSTRATION: Luke 11: 1-4

“Discipleship is the rubbing of one life off onto another. This demands an investment of time and energy.” But this can not be compared with the fruits yield from this investment.

- (i) They watched him pray
- (ii) They asked him to teach them to pray
- (iii) They watched him teach in the synagogue
- (iv) They watched him heal and do miracles
- (v) They watched him weep at the tomb of Lazarus
- (vi) They watched him denounce the religious leaders and the Pharisees

We teach others by the way we live our lives. The children you teach may be watching how you live your life. How you dress on Sunday and other days is an example to the children. They will be meeting you in the streets, and they see the kind of friends you hang around with. Sometimes they will be coming to your house and will find out what kind of music you listen to. *“We are prompted to learn from following personal example”* (p 22, Personal Discipleship, Philip Hunt). Our lives are constantly being studied. That is why teachers will be judged by a stricter standard (James 3:1).

JESUS’ METHOD OF TRAINING WAS DELEGATION:

- A. Disciples were delegated to go and preach and do miracles after giving them power -- Matthew 10: 5-32
- B. Disciples were delegated to distribute the bread and fishes to give to the people -- Matthew 14: 19
- C. Disciples were delegated to follow Him for prayer time -- Matthew 17:1-5
- D. Disciples delegated to pay taxes (Peter) -- Matthew 17:24-27
- E. Disciples delegated to prepare a donkey and a colt -- Matthew 21: 1-3,6
- F. Disciples delegated to prepare the Feast of Unleavened Bread -- Matthew 26:17-18
- G. Disciples delegated to makes other disciples of all nations.

Someone said, “Our children are the future of tomorrow.” Better, “Our Children are the church of today.” They can serve God right now. They don’ t have to wait until they grow up. We need to teach them how to serve God with the gifts that they have.

Those who receive Christ as their personal Savior need to continue coming and being taught the things that Jesus has commanded us to teach according to Matthew 28:20. Through faithfulness and prayer, we will see that their will be some who will zealous and eager to learn. These are the ones you should invest your life into.

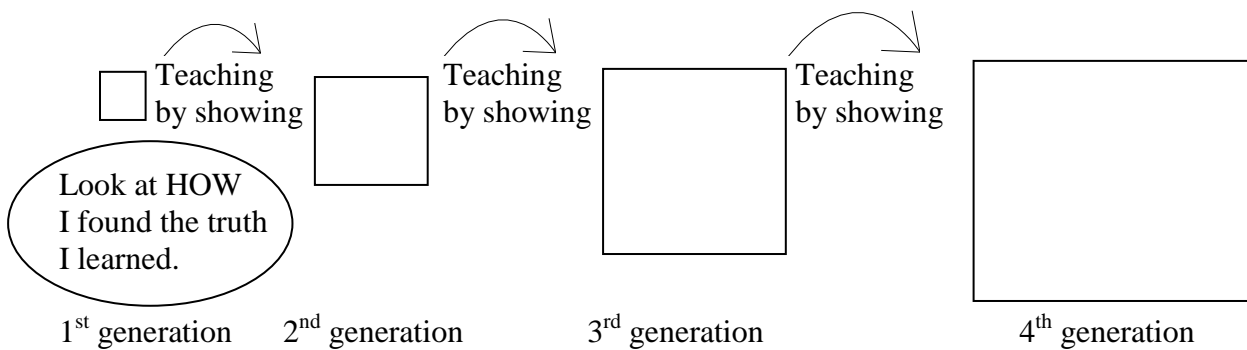
1. Ask them to pray before the beginning of the class period and thank them for praying for the whole class
2. Ask them to arrange the chairs before class. This is the stage where you start to involve them in the ministry. Let them feel part of the team.

The reason why you do this is to identify the leaders in the group. Others will just manifest themselves naturally; they will be willing to help you carry the lesson book or maybe your bag.

3. Ask one of them to lead one song. And congratulate them for doing a good job.
4. Ask them to volunteer to be part of the play and let them act out about Moses, Noah, Abraham or any Bible character. This will give them a sense of responsibility.
5. Ask them to perform in the service what they have been learning in their class.
6. Ask them to sweep the class on Saturday before the class period.

Bruce Wilkinson, President of Walk Through the Bible wrote, “**Maximum learning is always the result of maximum involvement.**”

The chart below shows how delegation works down the generations:



What you are doing is delegation. This is what Jesus Christ did with his disciples with a goal in His mind that these men will be the ones who will carry out the Great Commission. This is what I believe Paul did to Timothy (2 Timothy 2:2) and now Timothy should do the same to others. Why is delegation important to any ministry?

1. We will not be here forever and the work of Jesus Christ should continue. “Ministry is working yourself out of a job.”
2. This is Biblical and God’s design – 2 Timothy 2:2

If we want to see the next generation of servant leaders in our continent, we should be committed to discipleship. This is the method Jesus Christ used and with it changed the world upside down.

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