



# \* creche ministry

the MINISTRY PAPERS

## missed opportunities...

Sharon has come to your church for the first time. She hasn't been to church for many years, in fact since before she was married and had children. Life hasn't been going so well lately and somehow the thought came that church might help with getting things together.

The morning has been a nightmare already. Her husband decided he wouldn't come. The kids seemed just that little bit more ratty at breakfast and there weren't many clothes dry for them to wear. She'd heard about your church from a mum at playgroup. The directions just seem a bit hazy now crunch time has come. Ten minutes late, she walks into church.

Unfortunately, her friend isn't there. The welcomers are a bit stretched today and Sharon slips in unnoticed. A few people cast a friendly smile her way but no-one talks to her. Having noticed a few empty prams she suspects there's a crèche somewhere... and eventually finds it.

Her first impression is that nobody seems to be in charge. She's not sure if she's meant to stay in or not. Other parents are there but are busy chatting with each other. They seem unaware of their own children let alone Sharon and her needs.

She really had thought today would offer her some hope, that she might hear something worthwhile. Sharon heard a lot that morning, but not the Bible. What a missed opportunity. And will there be another? Sharon went home unsure if it was worth all the effort.

LEADERS:...before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' and 'meeting one to one'.

There are two main 'arms' of a healthy church: small groups and ministry teams. This **creche ministry** paper relates to the **ministry teams** arm. It's designed to help your crèche ministry team leader introduce you to what it means to be part of serving in the crèche ministry team at our church. It's much more than a training tool, it's all about relationships: who you minister *for*, who you minister *with*, and who you minister *to*..



investigate

*Ephesians 4 is a great starting point for all our ministry teams...*

### read Ephesians 4:11-16

1. What is the role of Bible teaching?

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2. What does this do for all God's people?

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3. In the light of this, why is crèche ministry vital?

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think & apply

4. What would the consequence be if crèche didn't happen?

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5. What personal challenges are you aware of in terms of playing your part in this ministry team?

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6. What role will being actively involved in a small group play in enabling you to carry out this ministry well?

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# flexible & fixed

Many of our ministry teams are focused on a particular age group or demographic, e.g. crèche, kids club, youth group, university ministry. That makes sense because each of these groups has its own particular needs. Each group has its own special challenges and opportunities. However, it's sometimes easy to recognise only what's **unique** about each group. It's easy to forget what **all people**, whatever age or stage, have in common. This section of the paper helps us think through what's **flexible** and what's **fixed** in our ministry to families through creche...



## read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

1. What is *flexible* in Paul's approach to ministry?

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2. What is *fixed* in Paul's approach to ministry?

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3. Referring to the 'profile of a crèche child' opposite, in what ways will ministry to these children need to be flexible?

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4. In all of this, what needs to stay fixed in our ministry to these children and their families?

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## profile of a crèche child (& family)

### the child

remember that church, especially for newcomers can be a strange environment for children too. We need to work hard to help the child feel at ease, valued and safe.

### the family

families come to church with a range of concerns, but their children's needs are always near the top of the list. One of the best ways we can serve families is to... work hard to help the child feel at ease, valued and safe. When that happens, parents are more likely to hear God's Word without distraction and get to know others.

### some special scenarios...

#### the newcomer

imagine the usual fears about entering a new environment and multiply it a few times. All parents want crèche to enable their children to be at ease, valued and safe... but the first experience is especially crucial. Put an extra effort in with newcomers.

#### the clingy child (or parent!)

this may be the first time a child has been separated from parents in such a way. Other parents have had a few unsuccessful attempts and are inclined to stop trying, keeping their child with them. That means they'll be distracted in church, and potentially others may be as well. Give special attention to gently encouraging these children into crèche. The best way to do this is to ensure they feel at ease, valued and safe.

#### the large family

it can be a challenge for large families with children of different ages going this direction and that in programs. It can be a great help for a crèche carer to respond to these needs.

#### the chatterer

some parents are drawn to the crèche as a place to chat. The better it is run, the easier it is to say, "we're OK here, go and enjoy the service..."



think & apply

## challenges and opportunities

Have another look at the 'profile of a crèche child'. Think through the particular challenges and opportunities of this ministry...



ideas for discussion

what are some of the <b>challenges?</b>	what are some ideas for <b>facing</b> these?
what are some of the <b>opportunities?</b>	what are some ideas for <b>making the most</b> of these?



# staying on target

Hopefully the previous page generated lots of discussion about gospel ministry to crèche children. On the *'flexible'* aspects of this ministry, there are certainly many **good** approaches possible: there are lots of good ways to care for children. But we need to also keep thinking through the all-important *'fixed'* aspect—the gospel of Christ—so we can get clearer about the **best** approach to crèche ministry. There are ways we can involve the gospel in this ministry so it's not just child-minding but ministry of the gospel. Crèche is a great opportunity to introduce kids to Jesus.

## profile of a classic crèche carer

Rhonda leads the crèche team at morning church. Her children are older now but she hasn't forgotten what it's like to have young children. It's her passion to help parents be able to participate as fully as possible in church by providing excellent care for their children. She takes the opportunity of evening church to make sure she's still growing through hearing Bible teaching. But morning church is all about serving parents at church.

For Rhonda, it's about the children too. She genuinely enjoys being around children. She loves getting to know each child and how crèche can best work for them. She knows what it takes to help children feel at ease: acknowledging them, remembering their name, finding out what they're into, etc. She makes it her aim that the children don't just 'survive' the hour but enjoy it so much that they look forward to coming back next week.

To achieve these aims Rhonda plans ahead for crèche. At the start of each term she puts together a simple program of appropriate activities. She then involves the crèche team in the weekly preparation. The team know the importance of getting there early to ensure things are set up. They are then in a position to fully focus on parents and their children as they arrive at church. Most importantly, Rhonda works closely with the welcoming team to ensure that any newcomers with crèche-aged children are well looked after.

After crèche is over Rhonda tries to get around to as many parents as possible to get to know them as well and in case there are any concerns to be aware of.

## the importance of nametags

it's vital that all crèche-carers wear nametags. It's important from a child protection point of view (more over page). It gives confidence to parents, and enables newcomers to identify who's in charge. It even helps the carers themselves in signifying the importance of their role.

## the ideal crèche space

the reality for most of us is working in buildings that weren't necessarily designed with the needs of children in mind! It's often a case of making the best of what you've got. Ideally, a crèche space is near where the parents are in church, but preferably slightly separated, from a sound point of view. A welcoming crèche room is bright, clean, tidy, ordered, and equipped with appropriate toys and resources. They shouldn't look like rejects from a garage sale. Dolls with one-eye missing may be quaint to some of us but are frightening to the average two-year old! All toys, along with the entire area, including its access, need to be safe.

## communication with parents

try to communicate with every parent regarding any specific needs, e.g. food and drink requirements, toilet arrangements, particular interests, etc

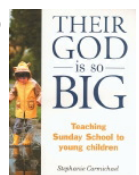
## classic activities

some classic activities that generally go down well with crèche kids are: playdough, bubble-blowing, puzzles, colouring-in, pasting, glitter, singing simple songs or rhymes.

## useful resources

there are lots of good resources out there to be found. For more activity ideas as well as modeling in relating to crèche-aged kids take a look at TV shows for this age-group. In terms of gospel content, music by Colin Buchanan is great input. Johnny Burns' music is also good for this age group.

For ideas on teaching the Bible to young children, 'Their God is so Big' by Stephanie Carmichael, and the associated "teaching little ones" resources are worth a look.



ideas for discussion

Working with children who are taking their first steps physically, we want to also help them take their first 'spiritual' steps, in following Jesus. What concepts about God do you think, for example, a three year old child can understand?

# child protection

a vital aspect of all ministry to children is child protection. Below is a 10 minute child protection health check for working with 0-5 year olds. You will also need to work through the 'child protection' ministry paper.

## the space...

- is there a telephone in case of an emergency?
- is there a basic first aid kit available?
- are there appropriate toilet facilities available for the children? Do all leaders know what your policy is with regard to toileting children?
- are dangerous detergents stored in a safe place out of reach?
- are electrical appliances (fans, heaters, CD players etc) out of reach?
- are power outlets (cords, extension leads, power points etc) out of reach or properly protected? For example, power point plugs for those not in use?
- have you thought about the maximum number of children that will fit your venue space? (You need about 2 ½ sq. metres for each child)
- if you have an outside play area is it properly fenced? The recommendation is a fence 1.5m high with self-closing child proof gates.
- is there sufficient shade in any outside play areas?
- is any play equipment in good order and in a safe place? (e.g. sand pits well drained, climbing frames sturdy and over soft fall etc)

## your leaders...

- have you considered how many leaders there should be per child? (1 adult to 3 children for 1-2 years, 1:4 for 2-3 years, 1:8 for 3-8 years)
- do all the leaders know what to do in case of an emergency?
- do you have enough leaders for at least two adults per group and have you thought about how parents will help?
- do you need a sign-in / sign-out process?

## breaking the Silence...

- do you know who to talk to at your church if you want to report an incident or ask a question about child protection?
- have you and all the other leaders on the team completed the Breaking the Silence training so that you are aware of your responsibilities for notification of abuse and the signs of abuse?

## paperwork...

- have any *new* leaders been through a selection processes, including reference checks where appropriate?
- do all leaders have a copy of the Breaking the Silence brochures "Our Policy" and "Our Code of Conduct"?
- do you have position descriptions for each leader?
- have each of your leaders complied with the screening process (Working with Children Check)?

*NOTE: If you have completed the paperwork last year you do not need to do it again.*