

Building a Thriving Kid's Ministry James Hamilton

The biggest responsibility of the church is for the smallest people in it

There is a 70% failure rate of children leaving the church. In other words, by the time church attending children reach adulthood, only 30% remain. (*Barna Institute*)

How do you build a Thriving Kid's Ministry? – It starts with doing the **small** things well.

Bayside is a big church, with a big budget, big resources, big facility, big programs, but I have learned that for us to thrive as a ministry we need to **focus on the small**.

"After this, Jesus went across Lake Galilee (or, Lake Tiberias). Many people followed him because they saw the miracles he did to heal the sick. ³ Jesus went up on a hill and there sat down with his followers. It was almost the time for the Jewish Passover Feast. Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him. He said to Philip, "Where can we buy bread for all these people to eat?" ⁶ (Jesus asked Philip this question to test him. Jesus already knew what he planned to do.). Philip answered, "Someone would have to work almost a year to buy enough bread for each person here to have only a little piece." Another follower there was Andrew. He was Simon Peter's brother. Andrew said, "Here is a boy with five loaves of barley bread and two little fish. But that is not enough for so many people."

Jesus said, "Tell the people to sit down." This was a very grassy place. There were about 5,000 men who sat down there. Then Jesus took the loaves of bread. He thanked God for the bread and gave it to the people who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish. He gave them as much as they wanted.

They all had enough to eat. When they had finished, Jesus said to his followers, "Gather the pieces of fish and bread that were not eaten. Don't waste anything." So they gathered up the pieces that were left. They filled 12 large baskets with the pieces that were left of the five barley loaves." JOHN 6:1-3

- It was a small boy, who brought a small meal. It was all he had; all he could give but it was enough for Jesus. Jesus multiplied the meal so that 5,000 + women and children would have a meal and Jesus would be glorified.

To build a thriving kid's ministry you must grow big and small at the same time.

Old Maps / New Maps

Christopher Columbus used a world map created by German cartographer, Henricus Martellus in 1491 to guide him to the discover of the Americas in 1492. This map was remarkable for its time and served a great purpose for new world discovery. In 2022 it is wildly inaccurate and obsolete. In a post Christian, post Covid reality many churches are still using old maps for children's ministry. The maps in their day were remarkable and effective but now they are outdated as we have learned and discovered what children and parents need in May 2022.

What are the old maps and what are the new maps?

**1. OLD MAP – CHILDCARE and ENTERTAINMENT
NEW MAP – VISION - PERSONAL CONNECTION TO FAITH THROUGH INTENTIONAL
MINISTRY**

Have a big vision and set a small number of goals

Bayside Kids Vision – (Related to the wider church vision) Help kids **know, love** and **serve** Jesus.
How?

- Build relationships,
- Create safe and fun environments
- Partner with parents

Bayside Kids goals for 2022: 500 salvations, 100 baptisms, 780 new families, 900 average attendance, 40% increase in volunteers and 40 4th-5th graders signed up for 45 serves serving and discipleship program.

You must define **why** you do what you do and then take **action**.

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world” Joel A. Barker

3 QUESTIONS:

What is your vision for your children’s ministry?

What goals have you set this year?

What action are you taking to meet those goals?

**2. OLD MAP – BIBLE ‘LITE’
NEW MAP – SCRIPTURE IS FOUNDATIONAL**

Kids need the big story of God and the small details of the narrative to apply it to their lives.

“Do what God’s teaching says; do not just listen and do nothing. When you only sit and listen, you are fooling yourselves. A person who hears God’s teaching and does nothing is like a man looking in a mirror. He sees his face, then goes away and quickly forgets what he looked like. But the truly happy person is the one who carefully studies God’s perfect law that makes people free. He continues to study it. He listens to God’s teaching and does not forget what he heard. Then he obeys what God’s teaching says. When he does this, it makes him happy.” James 1:22-25

Bayside Kids recently made the decision to write our own curriculum.

We ask 2 questions; What do we want the kids to **know**? What do we want the kids to **do**? (James 1:22)

- Everything we do is built around scripture – The most important 5-7 minutes is when we tell a bible story. If we want the best hour of a child's week to be at church, we want the best part of that hour to be when they EXPERIENCE God's Word.
- Our scope and sequence journeys through the bible in a year for three years in a row. Why? We want children to discover the whole picture of God's story and his plan for the world.
- When we tell bible stories, they are always told live, in person and we ask three questions; What do the kids **see**? What do the kids **hear**? and What do the kids **do**? (Connect with 3 key learning styles: Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic).
- Bible memorization with a purpose – Psalm 119: 11 *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You."* We ask what is the memory verse? AND What does it mean?

3 Questions:

What are you doing to make God's Word the foundation of your children's ministry?

How do you teach the kids to apply scripture?

What do the kids in your ministry look forward to the most?

3. OLD MAP – NUMERICAL GROWTH THROUGH ENTERTAINMENT AND PROGRAMS NEW MAP – SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP

Real life change happens in circles not rows

- Pastor Ray says that kids need two things. Experiences and Examples. So, they need amazing big experiences – that's why we do Breakaway and BIG events, but they also need influential adults and teens showing up in and speaking into their lives. Kids need mentors and examples.
- Faith is TAUGHT and TAUGHT. (*bouncy ball example*)
- *Ephesians 5:1-2 "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma".* Let kids want to imitate imitators of Christ.
- They will know we are Christians by our dynamic programs? creative environments? crazy motion songs? elaborate crafts? funny videos? dramatic storytelling? LOVE. How are you creating a culture and opportunities for kids to know they are loved – REALLY loved?

"Yes, our material is important. We need it to be engaging and communicate all the foundational truths to guide children to forming their concept of God. But, it's the PEOPLE, the facilitators in children's learning that are key. Often, kids are on their devices because of a lack of emotional connectedness with their parents. It's our unavailability as parents and educators that make them default to the easy stimulation of the screen. There are very few kids who will

remain engaged to a screen if an adult is ready to connect, play, listen or do a fun activity with them. Sadly, all too often we grown-ups are simply not available". Hettie Britz, Evergreen Parenting Course

- How can we create a culture where every child is seen, valued, and loved? – Lead Small by Reggie Joiner – 5 roles of a small group leader:

Be present – Connect their faith to a community

Create a safe place – Clarify their faith as they grow

Partner with parents – Nurture an everyday faith

Make it personal – Inspire their faith by your example

Move them out – Engage their faith in a bigger story

3 Questions:

How do the children know they are seen and loved when they are on your campus?

How would you describe the culture of your kid's ministry?

How can you help EVERY child in your ministry know they are seen and loved?

4. OLD MAP – PARENTS OUTSOURCE THE SPIRITUAL NURTURE OF THEIR KIDS TO THE CHURCH

NEW MAP – SPIRITUAL NURTURE OF KIDS IS A PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, THE FAMILY, THE CHURCH

Train the parents in the way they should go and when they are at home they will; not depart from it.

"Don't worry, it's just the first 40 years of parenting that are the hardest"

Engaged parents rank their top three struggles when it comes to guiding their children's spiritual formation:

1. Peer Influence (35%)
2. Digital Content (31%)
3. Video Games (30%)

(Barna – Guiding Children report)

59% of Christians worry about how their faith community welcomes and accommodates their kid.

41% of Christian parents worry often or all the time about their child's Christian faith

98.8% of Christian parents believe that connection to a faith community is an essential part of their family, yet 38.3% of Christian parents attend church less than once a week.

(Parent Cue – What Parents Aren't Telling You report)

Examples of Bayside Parent Partnership:

- *The Sideshow* – A weekly YouTube show telling the bible story and unpacking the lesson
- Monthly overview – A printed and emailed review of the themes and lessons for the month
- *Will you pray for me?* – A quarterly prayer journal / devotion to encourage parents to pray with and for their kids

3 Questions:

How do parents know what their children are learning and experiencing in your ministry?

How do you know what parents need from your church?

What does parent partnership look like for you?

5. OLD MAP – TEACH GOOD CHARACTER AND VALUES NEW MAP – SHARE THE GOSPEL CONSISTENTLY

Point kids to the cross to help them own their salvation and personal relationship with Christ.

It's easier to teach children to 'Be Good' than to 'Be Like Christ'. Just teaching kids good values will never lead them to Christ.

- Now is the time to share the gospel. 4/14 Window: 85% of people who make decisions for Christ, do so between the ages of 4-14yrs (*Barna, Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*)
- Children will develop Christian values because of their personal relationship with Jesus.
- *I Raised my Hand* is the Bayside gospel language. Have a clear strategy for presenting the gospel. Bayside Kids Strategy:
CONNECT - connecting with kids who respond.
COMMUNICATE - communicate with their parents the decision they have made.
INVITE - Invite them to take their next step.
CELEBRATE - Celebrate what God has done and is doing.

3 Questions:

How intentional are you in sharing the gospel with children?

Why is it important to share the gospel consistently with children?

What do you celebrate in your children's ministry?

How do you build a thriving kid's ministry? Be the boy who gave what he had, did what he could, present that to Jesus and watch and see what Jesus can do.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me:

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