

## *From Cradle to Calling: Nursery as the First Steps in Discipleship*

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*The nursery is often children's first encounter with the church—and that makes it a powerful place to begin shaping their experience of God's family. Far more than childcare, the nursery plants the earliest seeds of discipleship. Yet this ministry should never stand alone. A well-connected nursery values our youngest members of the covenant community. When nursery practices are intentionally aligned with the broader discipleship vision, every moment—every smile, every interaction, every act of care—helps lay the groundwork for a resilient, lifelong walk of faith.*

### Primary Reasons for Nursery

#### Principle:

The nurseries are one of the first places where children learn about the church. It is in the context of the nursery that our littlest children learn that they are safe in the House of the Lord, that they are loved in the House of the Lord, that they have a special place in the House of the Lord, and that they are part of God's family. (Psalm 122:1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!")

#### Practical:

The nurseries exist to provide a safe, happy place for children while their parents participate in either worship service or Sunday School that may be difficult for the child to sit through. Children are ALWAYS welcome in the service, but it may not be the best fit developmentally for them.

~Something to think about~

In any area of ministry, it is helpful to know what principles guide your vision and decisions. Once you are clear on your guiding principles, you can figure out the practical outworkings.

If you start with the practical, you are in danger of implementing procedures that are efficient, easy, and maybe even fun, but do not move your ministry toward your biblical goals.

# Ministry, Not Childcare~ Four areas to consider

## #1 Prayer

- Prayer impacts lives for the future.
- Every child that comes in should hear their name in a prayer.
- Pray when you are rocking, when you are holding, when playing on the floor.  
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.)

## #2 The Gospel

- Even little ones begin to memorize when there is enough repetition. These early memories often last for a lifetime!
- Have a Scripture passage for each nursery class that is repeated often to the children.
- Little ones can understand that God's Word is important and central to church life.
- God's Word is living and active! It can reach the heart of all His people.  
(Psalm 78:4 We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.)

## #3 Relationship

- Care for the little ones in such a way that they know they are valued gifts of God.
- They are members of the covenant community.
- Let them see your genuine love for them.
- Babies can sense stress the stressful times in nursery. Show patience during drop off and pick up and when babies are crying
- Use nursery to show how we "Love one Another."  
(Psalm 127:3 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.)

## #4 Entire Family

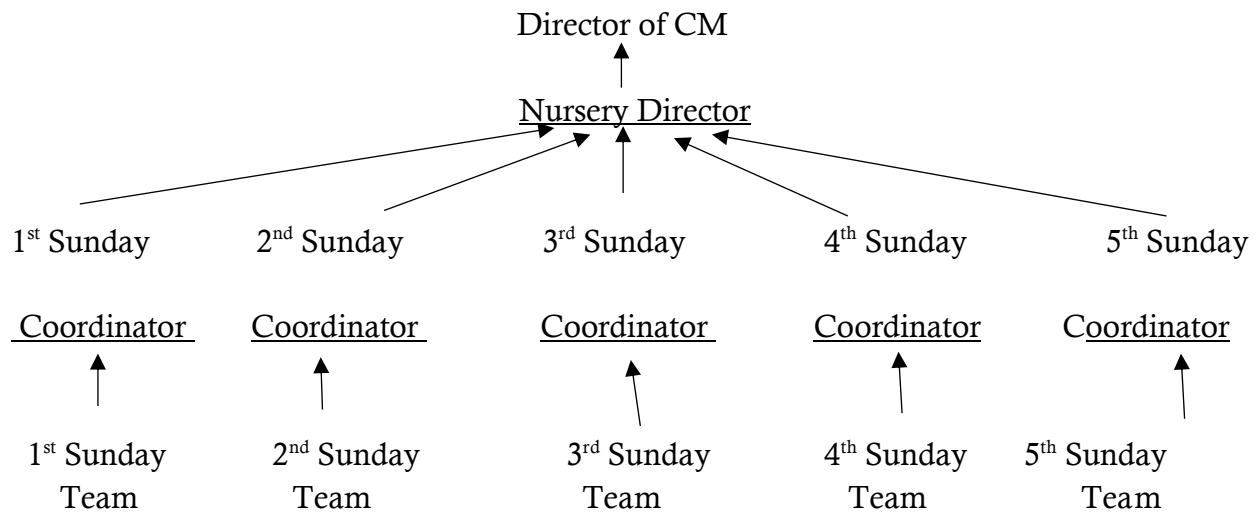
- A nursery experience may determine if a family returns
- Parents are encouraged and cared for when their child is loved in nursery (When you love a child, you are loving the parent)
- Nursery provides respite for weary parents; giving them the opportunity to hear God's Word and be refreshed while knowing that their children are also hearing God's Word!  
(Psalm 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"

## Implementation of the Vision

Staffing:

| Paid Staff   | Volunteer Staff   |
|--|---|
| No recruiting<br>Reliable<br>May not be equipped for ministry<br>Church Members don't miss service<br>May not be able to attend any church<br>Not under your session's spiritual authority<br><br>What else? | Can be hard to recruit to fill all the positions<br>May not be as reliable<br>Opportunity to fill vows<br>Builds community<br>Misses a service periodically, but usually attends<br><br>Under the session's spiritual authority<br><br>What else? |

Organizational flow: One possibility



### Nursery Director:

Oversees the needs of the nursery ministry, coordinating with the Director of CM as needed, and prays for the volunteers, children, and their families.

### Sunday Coordinators:

Each Coordinator leads a team of those serving in the nursery. He/she is responsible to remind those serving the week prior to their commitment, and assures that each class is adequately staffed on a Sunday morning. The Coordinator, in conjunction with the Nursery Director, makes sure that workers are trained and adhere to all policies. He/she also prays for the volunteers, the children, and their families during the week prior to serving.

### Team Members:

Team members are responsible to know and follow the policies and procedures, to find their own substitutes when needed, letting coordinators know of changes. They pray for the families and children!

## Sunday morning Structure

### **Weekly Coordinator:**

- Arrive about 15 minutes before service and check in with the Director of Children's Ministries. If you know of any last minutes illnesses or emergencies make sure to make the need known.
- Look over the classrooms and make sure they are ready.
- Welcome your workers and let them know of any changes or last minute information.
- Be ready to cheerfully welcome parents and children.

### **Team:**

- Arrive about 10 minutes before service and check in with your team leader.
- Look over the room, making sure all is in order.
- Pray for the morning with your team, or classroom worker

### **In the Classrooms:**

#### Welcome

- Every child is welcomed, prayed for, and assisted in transitioning into the classroom.
- Please pray for the children and their families as you prepare your heart to serve each week.

### **Relationship:**

- You have the opportunity to teach these little children that together you are all part of God's family! Please be proactive in your interaction with the children by engaging in play, dancing, reading, and talking with them.
- Help engage the children with one another, pointing out how all of you are part of God's family here at Church.

### **Safety:**

- Follow the Child Protection policies. Always have 2 CP approved adults in the nursery!
- Have good “check in” and “check out” policies and follow them!
- Make sure parents fill in any forms—have a phone number or pager, know children’s allergies!
- Label all sippy cups and snack containers. Do not allow children to walk around with them.
- It is a good idea to have a small first aid kit with plastic gloves, wipes, and Band-Aids, as well as small incident reports. If there is an “incident” such as biting or a fall, fill out two copies, one for the parent and one for the Weekly Team Leader.

## ~ CIRCLE TIME WITH THE ATTENDEES ~

My hand Says Hello

Praise Him Praise Him

This is the Day

Catechism Questions

Read a Bible Story

Pray

Craft?

### **The Gospel:**

- Once children graduate from infant nurseries, there should be a “Circle Time.” This works well right before or after serving a snack.
- Sing a simple song or two (Sing the same songs every week!)
- Pray for the children
- Say the Bible verse for your nursery
- Read a short Bible story from *Read Aloud Bible Stories* by Ella Lindvall.
- In Toddler A and B, review the following 3 Catechism Questions:
  1. Who made you? A. God
  2. What else did God make? A. God made all things
  3. Why did God make you and all things? A. For His own glory