

Preface

Being true to the mission, not diluting or polluting the truth is always in the very forefront of my mind as I prepare for battle against our enemy. I suit up every morning with God's Armor and fill my hands, heart, mind and spirit with God's Word, and having met personally with The Lord for much needed encouragement and guidance, I feel adequately prepared for whatever may lay ahead of me when I venture out of my front door (and even sometimes before I venture out). I make my way to 1 ground zero, our local elementary school. One may be inclined to think I am greatly exaggerating my role as a children's pastor, and that for the most part it's really not that big a deal. If so, then perhaps your understanding of the role of a children's pastor needs reshaping.

Never before in the history of the church has there been a more clarion call for men and women to teach, train and disciple all of our younger saints in the faith. The battle to gain access to the hearts and minds of the children of the King has been in full swing since Adam was given his first breath. Since that time, the enemy has pulled no punches in his all-out, no-holds-barred effort to turn the hearts of the heirs of heaven against the truth of their Father's love.

For centuries, the body of Christ has mistakenly operated in the understanding that children are often smelly, loud, uncomfortable baggage accompanying much needed, capital-carrying wallets of the adult parishioners and as such, they must be volleyed into closets and pacified with the latest, most affordable curriculum in hopes that some of them will see the need to take up their crosses and become the much needed, capital-wielding adults who see the value of church in their futures. This perspective has been a critical tactical error and our enemy has seized upon it.

We, the church have allowed our most valuable assets: the most moldable, pliable, precious resource on the planet to be stolen from right under our righteous-elevated noses because we didn't see the opportunity, or the need, to actively engage these energetic, vibrant young believers into the most powerful forces in the universe.

Years ago, Nancy and I realized the tactical advantage that the forces of evil had trained on our children. I heard the Holy Spirit say in my heart: "It is imperative that we reach, teach and disciple the children who are occupying the

damp beige-colored, dimly lit recesses of our churches if we are to secure the future of the Church.” The six to twelve-year olds who sit around eight foot tables on metal folding chairs coloring poorly copied Bible pictures with broken crayons are not the church of tomorrow as most think. They are the church of today who are being ushered down a path of boredom and into the rolls of those Ken Ham calls “The Already Gone.”

We need to see more clearly, and understand this great commission with more clarity and urgency. We need the perfect 20/20 Vision of God to see and be seen the way God sees. I cry out daily that my eyes may see just as Elisha prayed in 2 Kings 6:17 NIV “Lord please open his eyes that he might see...”; and as recorded in Psalm 119:18 NLT “Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions.”

The story that unfolds as you turn the pages of this book is the journey that Nancy and I are taking. This book describes the vision God has given us to change children’s ministry. It tells our steps toward creating a viable, energetic program where children can be reached, taught and disciplined into becoming a part of the powerful, unmovable church of the loving God.

As you read, you will find that we take our calling extremely seriously because we are reminded of what Jesus said in Matthew 18:6 NIV:

“If anyone causes one of these little ones---those who believe in me---to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

I’m not a great swimmer so I make it my goal in life to stay far away from the deep end of God’s judgement.

Each child, every child needs the opportunity to meet Jesus for themselves, to make their own choices to follow Him, and not to be assimilated into a spiritual stupor by the latest, poorly presented, state-of-the-art miscommunication of what Christianity is. In Matthew 19:14 NIV

“Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

How will the little children come to Jesus unless someone specifically goes out of their way to introduce them to The Savior? How will they come to The Savior unless someone is convinced of the importance of taking the message of God’s love to them, the souls who have limited understanding of His love, those who have not seen much of life’s experiences, and who might even still believe in Santa Clause.

“Can a child really get saved?” One pastor asked.

My answer is a resounding YES!

“How do you get children to receive a personal relationship with the Lord?” Great question. I will answer it in the “How to Begin A Children’s Ministry: Questions and Answers” section of this book.

You read about my allusion to the battlefield earlier. My battlefield is our local elementary school. If you don’t believe that it is a battlefield, ask your elementary school principal for their assessment. This is where children assemble and spend most of their childhood days. It’s the perfect place to reach, teach and disciple children, yet I know what you are thinking, “How can we do this in public schools?” It isn’t as difficult as you think. Check out the chapter entitled “If You Can Read You Can Do Anything”.

Nancy and I have spent a lifetime working with children and for many years have felt the need to write down our experiences, our victories and failures. At the urging of our Senior Pastor, Dr. Jeff Wickwire, and many others, we have created this book. We pray that it will not only bless you but also challenge you to rethink your children’s ministry so that you can make it relevant to the needs of both today’s church and children.

Changing the world one child at a time, Ray and Nancy Baldwin

Chapter 1

WE'RE NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE

In 1780, the Owner and Editor of the Gloucester Journal, Robert Raikes, started his first school for children. It began for boys in the families of chimney sweeps in Sooty Alley, Gloucester (England), with girls being allowed to attend several years later. This school was located right across the street from the City Prison. They met in the home of a Mrs. Meredith. The original daily schedule, as written by Raikes, was: "The children were to come after ten in the morning, and stay till twelve; they were then to go home and return at one; and after reading a lesson, they were to be conducted to Church. After Church, they were to be employed in repeating the catechism till after five, and then dismissed, with an injunction to go home without making a noise."¹

Robert Raikes was described as warmhearted and flamboyant. With the use of his newspaper he advertised his "New Idea." After his first editorial in 1783, his schools spread with "astonishing rapidity".



Founder of Sunday School, Robert Raikes

In 1785, the Sunday School Society was set up to organize, coordinate and develop this new work among the poor children in northern England. In this same year,

¹ Moses, Montrose J. (1907). *Children's Books and Reading*. New York: Mitchell Kennerley.

in Manchester and Salford alone there was said to be close to 1800 students attending “school” every Sunday. During this period, throughout Northern England and Wales, it was quite common that both adults and children attended these classes. Even after enduring vicious opposition, by 1831, Robert Raikes’ “Sunday schools” were reaching and teaching almost 1,250,000 English children. That number equaled almost 25% of the population.

[I wholeheartedly commend these pioneer children’s ministers of long ago. Their ideas and efforts reached so many and in so many ways](#)

I’ve heard it said that if you continue to do what you have always done, expecting different results, then you might be bordering on foolishness. For years my wife, Nancy, and I have spent our lives teaching and training children in the United States. We have also traveled to several countries sharing the good news of a different approach to the 1700-1800s model of Children’s “Sunday school.” We have talked to both children and adults. In all our years of doing this, we have noticed that one thing has stood true:

The world is full of foolishness when it comes to doing what we need to do to reach the children of our world.

Let me explain...

For a couple hundred years, the church has followed, like sheep, the efforts of a man who created a tool and a machine that would educate the poor working children of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Because the children worked eighteen hour days, six days a week, they did not have the opportunity to receive any type of education except on Sundays. Because of these limitations, Raikes created what he called "Sunday School". This was a way to not only educate the working "white slaves" of England but also to give them a decent meal and a bath.

Children came from all over their communities to attend these classes. Their curriculum was simply a Bible. Hundreds and thousands of children and many adults



where taught to read and write in these “Sunday Schools” during this time of the industrial revolution. Through these classes, many also found faith in God, which opened the door to a spiritual revolution. As children and adults learned to read, they also learned about God, heaven, creation, angels, miracles, and yes, Jesus. Their minds were educated and their hearts changed.

Eventually the church got on the bandwagon and said, "Hey, this ‘Sunday School’ is a great way to educate our kids about God. I know it worked and has worked for many decades.”

This new “Sunday School” idea also began to catch on widely with evangelicals. Two in particular were Hannah and Martha More. They were sisters who lived in Mendip Hills in southern England. Their schools went beyond Raikes’ original design. They included innovative ideas to help children learn. They started classes that were better suited to both age limits and children who were at different levels in their education. They even went as far as to insert energetic songs and music in the lessons, when children’s attention spans began to wane. The sisters argued that, to achieve the best results, it might be advantageous to be kind to the children.

And so... SUNDAY SCHOOL was Birthed.

Their battle cry was: "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." They started training classes and called them Sunday School. Every week churches all over the world held Sunday School classes for all ages including adults.

Eventually huge printing and publishing companies were called upon as the cry rang out for more curriculum, better curriculum, and more powerful curricular approaches to reach today's families with the precious Word of God. Sunday School publishing became a big business. It exploded with ideas from workbooks, coloring books, puzzles, prizes, and in later, more modern times records, cassette tapes, videos DVD's, puppets, full body characters, other types of illusions, and all manner of fancy eye-catching gadgets. Each one was designed with the modern child in mind. These curricula were tried, tested, and proven to work.

Every September new and innovative creations hit the Christian book store shelves. Every year new children's seminars and conferences sprang up all over the country, each crammed with vendors doing everything they could to sell their wares to frustrated and often depressed children's workers. These workers were desperately seeking a new way to reach the now almost unreachable, unteachable, hardened children in our modern world's local churches.

I know I said "now almost unreachable, unteachable, hardened children in our modern world's local churches".

Let me ask you a question. If you were a child today would you attend your church? I have a catch phrase I use a lot... "We are not in Kansas anymore!"

This is no longer your grandmother's church. We must find a way to take hold of the ever growing imagination of the modern day child, who has been deeply affected by outside stimuli, which is far more exciting and compelling than anything the church has been offering.

Consider this...

The child of today is not the same animal as the child Robert Raikes encountered in 1780's England. The modern day child has been bombarded with 'Stuff'-----TV, movies, video games, Disney World, computers, iPads, iPods, iPhones, and every other electronic gadget available to



man. Every day, the news is filled with both horror and hate. Today, simply by watching the news, sit-coms and soap operas on television, and playing the most descriptive video games filled with violence, foul adult language and situations, most kids have had a concise adult education long before they reach the age of ten. They are bombarded with information from every possible direction. In the photo to the left, Nancy and Much, the puppet, are teaching a lesson for today's children.

When they attend school, these same 10-year-olds are expected to learn content in their elementary school courses that you and I didn't even cover in high school. Moreover, by the time that they reach their high school years, they are taking courses that were once only given to third-year university students. The child of today is not the same child you were at the same age. ***What reached you will NOT reach today's child.***

Why do we continue to do the same old thing, not gain any ground, but rather continuing to lose more and more ground? Why are we so hell-bent on using what has not worked in decades in hopes that it might possibly work if we only buy the next, newest gadget or try harder and pray more diligently.



**The child of today is not the same animal
as the child in 1780's England.**

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but rather continuing to lose more and more ground?**

Little Johnny

Take the average life of the average ten-year old boy today. He is a child of a broken home, or he simply lives with his single mom who works every hour she can just to make ends meet. He gets up early every Monday morning, eats breakfast (if he's lucky) and runs to catch the bus for an hour long ride to school. The bus driver yells "Sit down and be quiet." He arrives at school and his teachers tell him to "Sit down and pay attention." For seven hours that day, he does everything he can to not only stay awake and pay attention, but also to get an education. At the end of the school day, he gets back on the bus and rides for an hour. Upon his arrival at home, he quickly shucks his coat and school books and heads toward the door and the outside world. But, his mom tells him, "Get your homework done before you go play or watch television."

For the next couple of hours, he labors to finish up so that he might have a little free time to be what he is... 'a child'.

Then, it's off to bed early because it's a school night and the whole thing starts all over again early the next day. For five days every week, he rises early and goes through this ritual to gain what his parents and teachers hope for... an education.

Do you suppose this little guy really enjoys going to school every day of the week, working a couple of hours or more every night with homework, and then doing more "school" on the weekend too?

Ah, the weekend! A time when Johnny can get out of the weekly grind and go run, play, and have adventures with his friends! But, no. Along comes the church.

Johnny gets an invitation to attend church. Mom and dad and the church hope and pray that Johnny will find Christ and become a godly man. These aspirations are placed, with high expectations, in the time-tested program (Sunday School). This "school" starts early on Sunday mornings where children are asked to come dressed in their 'Sunday best'. They are also asked to sit in cold, beige-colored rooms with oversized, metal chairs around a well-used table. The teacher, who may or may not want to be there, tells the children who show up to "please sit down." They ask them to pay attention for the next sixty minutes while they cover all the material that the Sunday School Superintendent expects them to teach.

Their battle cry is "Johnny, we want you to come to Sunday School today. Do you know what Johnny heard? He heard the word "school" and nothing else. He doesn't want to go to "school" again for the sixth day of every week. (Quick thought... School to children is their job and to them its 'work').

The very last thing Johnny wants to do is to come and sit in yet another class on a day that he supposed to be resting. (Johnny's thinking is.... didn't God say that this was a day of rest?).

Let me ask you the same question I have asked hundreds of adults all over the world. How would you like it if after working five days a week, eight hours a day and going home to work another two hours every evening, if you were asked, and expected to go back to work on Sunday morning, but this time you were to do it for free?

Right... That's what I thought.

Johnny isn't the only child who feels the same way that you just felt.

More children than most of us care to imagine are already tired of church and Sunday School. Even children who regularly attend are really already gone in their minds. They have decided that the very first opportunity they have they will leave Sunday School (church) and never return.

To the average child today the stories about God, Jesus and the Bible were simply just that, stories, fables, fairy tales; the stuff adults tell children to keep their young imaginative minds alive, and to control them through guilt and authority.

The days of Sunday school are over, they have passed into history and honestly they need to be there to stay. Only in recent years has a new and innovative way to reach young, eager minds for the Lord arisen. It has emerged out of the sheer necessity to actually redeem this generation from spiritual disaster. Children's Church and Children's Ministry have taken their place and stepped up to the plate in today's modern church. Now instead of Sunday School teachers, there has arisen from the heart of God a species of super humans called the Children's Pastor/Minister.

Let me ask you... If there were a better way to reach our generation of children would it be worth your time to check it out?

Wouldn't it be better to first introduce Johnny to Jesus and then tell him about the book God has written for him? Wouldn't it be better than attempting to cram tons of mindless information into his brain every weekend at Sunday School? Wouldn't it be better than just continuing to do what hasn't been working successfully for decades, in hopes that someday or someday, perhaps on his own, he will realize that Jesus loves him and he will turn his life over to God? I'm sorry but this time-tested,

centuries-old model of a typical “Sunday School” approach has failed miserably in epic proportions. If it had worked, we would not have so many young people wandering about the world in a religious stupor. We would not have moms and dads who no longer attend church because of the efforts of well-meaning churches who taught 'Religious Education' to them when they were children instead of reaching their hearts with the Love of God.

As I sit here writing this, I am painfully aware that the church is failing. She is dying and no one seems to know what to do or who to call, as we fall on our knees and cry out to God for revival.

We are just one generation away from total spiritual annihilation. It's time we changed our tactics and start doing what works to reach kids like Johnny. The message of God's love will never change but the packaging must, or we will become the last generation left to read the obituary of the body of Christ to a lost and dying generation.



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A New Yet Old Idea

We have found this new way to be extremely effective in reaching children and training them in the way they should go. Actually it's not as new a method as you might think. The model we use can be found throughout the scriptures.

Every time I say reaching and training, I really mean discipling children to become the vibrant, charismatic body of Christ equipped to reach and train future generations for Christ.

Are you ready to learn what has become so blatantly obvious to so few churches?

First, what is the way they [today's children] should go? Learn to love God with all their hearts and become active ministers of the Gospel.

Second, how do we get them to learn this? Show them a true and living Christ... Introduce them to a loving Father God and let them form a lasting relationship with Him.

Third, what do you do with them when they have learned this? Teach and train them in ministry.

How we can answer these three important questions for all of our children of today is found in the rest of this book. We'll begin these answers by looking at why Children's Pastors and Children's Ministers began. In Chapter 2, I will explain why I became one! After reading my story, my prayer is that you will decide to join me.

Testimony of Christie Gare, Former Child in KidzTurn

As a child, I have a very vague memory of Sunday School. I do remember it was a more formal setting and that it was not something I enjoyed. I only went because we were supposed to while my parents were in Sunday School with their friends. Later, Pastor Ray started the Children's Church at our church. It was FUN. I remember some of the songs and lessons to this day, 30+ years later. I remember the atmosphere and the fun lessons with music, visual aids, and stories. Pastor Ray and Miss Nancy, as we called them, set up the Children's Church with an amazing forest feel and everything to match. There were no videos - just songs and lessons carefully prepared and studied. It was obvious that they took this seriously and it wasn't just an afterthought.

Another testimony to how Children's Church was effective was when I "graduated" to middle school and had to go to Sunday School with other middle schoolers, I quickly found how boring and distant to my life it really was. In fact, after a few weeks, I remember going back to Children's Church to "help" with the kids. This was such an impactful time for me and I was even given some responsibility which helped me to grow in leadership, gave me ideas on how to present the Gospel and enabled me to grow in my faith. I have fond memories of helping with the ministry during my middle and high school years.