

4 Ways to Help Parents Be the Spiritual Influence in Their Child's Life

By Lori Grasty

One of the biggest changes in children's ministry is the transition from pouring into kids to partnering with parents. For a long time in children's ministry we focused mainly on kids and guiding them on their faith journey. But we know that that's rarely enough.

Recently I attended a local cross-denominational connection event for children's ministry directors. I found that we are all working on this same challenge. Not only are we feeding kids, but we are trying to enable parents so that their child's faith walk doesn't take place for only one or two hours a week through a teacher. The challenge we are wrapping our brains around is: How do we help parents to be the number one influence in their child's faith?

While it is an amazing celebration to bring a child to Christ, it is more vital than ever to walk with parents to resource them to bring their family, and in turn, their child, on a journey to Christ. Parents are bombarded with opportunities for their families but are seeking more. And we cannot compete with this. We do not want to 'win' at being the spiritual influence for the child. Rather, we succeed when we empower the parent to guide the child's spiritual growth.

But how do we begin this process?

Four Ways to Help Parents Be the Spiritual Influence in Their Child's Life

1. Communicate with parents

Let the parent know what you are doing in class/groups. Tell them what to expect each week (or just next week) and questions they can ask through the week to further connect on the subject. Maybe make a list for easy car conversations, meaningful dinnertime questions to ask. Send monthly newsletters on upcoming events and ongoing connection opportunities. With that being said, while it is easiest to focus on the events, I have found the most read e-newsletters that I have sent offered helpful tips/advice (ways to pray with your kids, etc.) and not just upcoming events.

2. Follow up with parents on insights and celebrations

Send a note periodically or take a minute to talk to a parent before or after the kid's class/group (while your volunteers are covering). Let the parent know some of the questions and interests their child has such as, 'I love having Sam on Wednesday nights, he is always great at leading the kids' worship songs,' or 'Addy is great at praying and loves leading small group prayer time.' These are things that a parent would NEVER know unless you share. But these things are wonderful for parents to know in order to encourage their spiritual growth beyond your classroom.

3. Resource families for intentional ministry

Be in-touch with the challenges your parents face so that you can be on-target for providing appropriate ministry connection opportunities for them. If you are offering the same thing everyone else is offering, it will just be one more thing for them to do. But if you can offer something that they need (open gym time to blow off steam, family game night to connect, mid-week meal so they don't have to cook) you can further support them. We actually have intentionally chosen not to do a program at one time. When we had a lot going on in the church, my team chose to support and encourage engagement in other ministry areas rather than holding our own. They wanted to respect and not try to take away the small amount of time families do have together. Since we communicated that, our families appreciated it and were willing to commit further when that season had passed.

4. Partner with other ministry areas

Children's ministry is best when it's embraced by the whole church. Work with other staff to create relationships and opportunities for connection. Can your kids participate in the choir? Will your praise team do one of your worship songs in service so that the kids can dance on the stage and lead the congregation in worship? These are great ways to show kids what they can be a part of once they outgrow children's ministry. It also introduces parents to other relationships in the church. Explore what programs and staff are willing and able to incorporate children's programming in their area.

How will you help parents be the spiritual influence in their child's life?