

# WHAT DO WE DO WITH CHILDREN IN COMMUNITY GROUPS?

Sojourn Church Midtown 2020

## THE OPPORTUNITIES

- You can—and should!—**see children as signs of God's blessing** (Ps 127:3-5).
- You have an opportunity to **make disciples** of every nation and every generation (Mt 28:18-20).
- You can **welcome children** into the fellowship of the people of God (Mk 10:13-16).
- You have an opportunity to **partner with parents** in discipleship of their children (Eph 6:4).
- You have a non-negotiable responsibility to create environments that **eliminate to the full extent of your capacity any possibility that any child might be abused** in any way by a babysitter, volunteer, or another child; if there is any suspicion of abuse, you are responsible to report this suspicion to appropriate legal authorities *before* you report to anyone in your group or in your church.

## EASY BUT UNHEALTHY MODELS

### 1. Lord of the Flies

*Children isolated together in other rooms or in unseen areas*

Strengths: None

Weaknesses: Too many to list

### 2. Adventures in Babysitting

*Children overseen by a solo babysitter*

Strengths: Relatively easy, consistent

Weaknesses: Risk and liability escalate when babysitter is watching children from multiple families, little or no spiritual formation for children

### 3. Here We Are Now, Entertain Us

*Children watching a family-friendly film, with a sitter or with volunteers or in view of group*

Strengths: Relatively easy, consistent, can help children to look forward to community group

Weaknesses: Disagreement among parents about content, incapable of maintaining children's attention especially if multiple ages are involved, little or no spiritual formation for children, risk and liability escalate if solo babysitter is watching children from multiple families

## HEALTHY AND BALANCED MODELS

### 4. Here We Are Now, Entertain Us—But Now, With Jesus!

*Children watching theologically-sound and well-produced videos that teach biblical truths, with a sitter or with volunteers or in view of group*

### **SOURCES FOR VIDEOS:**

*What's In the Bible?* ([whatsinthebible.com](http://whatsinthebible.com)); *The Bible Project* ([thebibleproject.com/all-videos/](http://thebibleproject.com/all-videos/)); JellyTelly streaming video ([www.jellytelly.com](http://www.jellytelly.com))

**Strengths:** Provides some discipleship, relatively easy, consistent, can help children to look forward to community group

**Weaknesses:** Incapable of maintaining children's attention especially if multiple ages are involved, risk and liability escalate if a solo babysitter is watching children

### **5. Colour My World**

*Print out activity or coloring sheets each week that coordinate with the text that you're studying, provide each child with a designated clipboard, children complete activities among adults, talk about what they've done at the end of group time*

**Strengths:** Provides some discipleship, relatively easy, consistent, can help children to look forward to community group

**Weaknesses:** Incapable of maintaining some children's attention especially if multiple ages are involved

## **HEALTHY BUT HARD MODELS**

### **6. Meet Me Halfway**

*Plan an activity in which children and adults can participate together at the beginning; dismiss children for videos or other activities while adults engage in deeper discussion and prayer*

**Strengths:** Children are disciplined and welcomed into fellowship

**Weaknesses:** Requires some preparation and intentionality; incapable of maintaining some children's attention especially if multiple ages are involved

### **7. Come Together**

*Fully integrate children into community group, including questions they can answer, using catechism questions in which everyone participates, having children read Scripture*

**Strengths:** Children are disciplined and welcomed fully into fellowship

**Weaknesses:** Requires time-intensive preparation and intentionality, some topics may be difficult or inappropriate for children

## **NEXT STEPS**

- What is **one step** that your group could take in a healthier direction?
- How could your group **welcome children as blessings** and **partner with their parents** more effectively?
- How could your group **increase safety** for children either by placing children in sight of the group or by rotating a cycle of volunteers so that children are never overseen by one individual?