

Children's Work Guidelines – Athens

OUR VISION: The children's work is to cultivate and nurture our next generation. It should not simply be babysitting in order for the saints to come to the meetings. It is also not merely a Sunday school work to educate our children like in a school. On the positive side, the children's work aims to gain the neighborhood children with their families for the church. From these we can see that the children's work is greatly related to the growth of the church.

OUR GOAL: The goal of the children's work is to build children up in their humanity to be proper human beings. Our emphasis is to cultivate a proper humanity in the children rather than teach them with premature knowledge. Gradually, we can convey to them a deep impression that there is a God in the universe, that man fell and committed sin, and that the Lord Jesus is our Savior. Eventually (in 6th grade) we can help them to receive the Lord and be saved in a definite way.

OUR PERSON: In the church the most important thing is the person; the person is the way, and the person is the Lord's work. In whatever a person does, the most important thing is to have a heart. We must let God open our eyes to see the preciousness of the children and their importance in God's hands. When we see the importance and value of a certain matter, then spontaneously we have a heart for it. If you want to do this work, you must like the children, care for them, and be concerned about their affairs; this may be considered the minimum "capital" required for the children's work.

OUR SCOPE: When we speak of the children's work, we are referring to children who have not graduated from elementary school but are more than five years old. The place to carry out the children's work should not be limited to Lord's Day morning. A normal, proper and healthy children's work begins in the home with their parents and family; it can also be carried out during the week in the homes and neighborhoods of the saints.

OUR LESSONS: The lesson materials are not composed in full; they are simply guidelines. Saints who are burdened for the children should come together regularly to pray, fellowship and consider how to impart the key point(s) from the lesson. **Lessons are posted** on the www.churchinathens.org website.

The material for the elementary level (5-7 years old) should be entirely on the child's perspective. Bible stories are not necessary at this level. Gradually as we proceed to the intermediate (7-9 years old) and advanced levels (9-12 years old), we can give the children a little more Bible knowledge.

We should simply **impress the children with the facts in the Bible** and give them a general knowledge of the truth **without giving them too much doctrine**. For the children in the advanced group the gospel can be incorporated into the lesson, where and when appropriate.

The **goal of the lessons** is that the children would learn: 1) To be deeply impressed that there is God and to know who God is, 2) to see God in creation, and 3) the preciousness of man (humanity) in God's creation, showing that man is different from the animals, 4) what is proper humanity, 5) what is proper character, and, 6) to know the law (intermediate and advanced age group).

CARING FOR THE CHILDREN ON LORD'S DAY

NURTURE: The entire time we spend with the children is important, not just the lesson. We are here to shepherd and nurture them to have a proper humanity and to create an atmosphere so that they would be attracted to the Lord and enjoy being with God's people.

CARE: The most important qualification of a serving one is to have a caring heart. How we are with the children, through the singing, craft, snacks, walk to the park, etc. is just as important as the lesson. The entire time with the children is an opportunity for the serving ones to infuse God's love, to mold their character, to present a pattern of proper humanity, to deposit God's word in them little by little, and to cultivate their heart to receive the Lord's salvation in the future.

NO LEAVEN: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump". We should not bring anything related to Halloween, Christmas, Easter or Valentine's Day into the children's work. Not only should we not speak about these things with the children we should also not have any craft or snacks related to these holidays and festivals.

SAFETY: For the safety and welfare of the children, there must be at least 2 serving ones each week. Limit the physical contact with the children.

DISCIPLINE: To maintain order where all the kids can benefit, a serving one may take a child who is being disruptive away for a "timeout" if a child is not helped by a gentle admonition. Please view this as an opportunity to shepherd the child, instead of a harsh discipline. We want the children to have many happy memories of their time spent in the children's meeting. If the child does not respond positively they should be taken to their parents.

PREPARATION BEFORE THE CHILDREN'S MEETING

Introduction: The lesson materials were not prepared as detailed lesson plans but as a starting point for serving ones to fellowship and develop. Each lesson needs to be developed in a way that can be applied to the children. Every week the serving ones need to meet together to:

1. Pray together for the children and the children's meeting time (Mon. pm @ 8:30). Pray during the week with the one you serve with; and pray on the Lord's Day morning with all the serving ones.
2. Fellowship about the children (condition, behavior, special needs, capacity).
3. Meet with the serving ones from the previous Lord's Day to fellowship what occurred during the children's meeting that day (Mon. pm @ 8:30).
4. Read and pray over the verses and lesson material.

5. Fellowship about how to apply the lesson. Consider your audience and use appropriate examples or stories to help the children understand the lesson. It is good to use real life examples that relate to the children.
6. Select songs –
 - i. They do not need to relate to the lesson but should be age appropriate.
 - ii. The goal of the singing is to warm the children up; to give them a happy heart.
 - iii. Do not introduce songs that talk about Christ living in us or the subjective experience of Christ – many children are not yet saved and we don't want them to sing prematurely about the indwelling Christ.
7. Snacks –
 - i. Snacks are provided but you are also welcome to bring a special snack or fruit.
 - ii. Nut-free zone. No nuts. No nut products for craft or snack.
 - iii. Please store all snacks in the plastic bins with lids
8. Prepare crafts.
9. Plan some activities and games.
 - i. No games with dice or playing cards
 - ii. Music - Bible Story Songs, History of the Called Race, Bible Camp singing, and Hymns, Jr. are appropriate during activities/crafts. No videos or outside music in children's meetings
 - iii. Outdoor activities: 2 serving ones must go together; take a cell phone and be back in the hall by 11:50.

PRESENTATION OF THE LESSON

1. We should not give the children premature knowledge about the subjective experiences of life. For example, we should not tell the children about bearing the cross, dealing with the self, or that they need to follow the sense of life.
2. We should not give the children too much doctrines or teachings. Some examples of too much doctrine are 1) to give them the spiritual interpretations of the father, son, robe, ring, fatted calf when telling them the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, and 2) to tell them God is our rock because most children will understand that literally.
3. We should not give the children religious concepts and thoughts. For example, God loves the good people and is angry with the bad people; or that people go to heaven when they die.
4. We should avoid emphasizing the exercise of their spirit using life practices (e.g. calling on the Lord, pray-reading His word) until the children are regenerated, scaring them with details about God's judgment and the lake of fire, and bringing up holidays and festivals that are earthly and even pagan (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Valentine's Day).

Be a pattern to the children of proper humanity and one who believes in God and loves God. "...for the sake of the church life, we need to have a proper human living in this present age." (Footnote: Ephesians 6:1¹)