

stuff you wish they taught in seminary

A background image of numerous colorful Easter eggs in various colors including blue, green, yellow, orange, pink, and purple, scattered across the page.

5 Reasons

***KIDS' MINISTRY IS SO IMPORTANT TO CHURCHES
THAT WANT TO BREAK THE 1,000 BARRIER***

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Churches that grow beyond 1,000 in attendance are today among a radical minority. In fact, 98% of all churches never reach this size. During my interaction with hundreds of churches that have been able to overcome this barrier, I have realized that they present several striking common characteristics. Correspondingly, **effective and growing Kids' Ministry is one of the things evident across the board in churches that have smashed the 1,000 barrier.** These churches have invested both finances and leadership to lead their Kids' Ministry to a healthy place where it constitutes an essential thriving aspect of the church's ministry.

Kids' Ministry is vitally important to build the strength of your church if you want to break the 1,000 barrier in the weekend service attendance. This might seem as a surprise to a leader who doesn't spend much time directly engaged in Kid's Ministry, so here I've pulled together a few reasons to stress upon its significance:

Kids' Ministry Requires A LOT of Volunteers - A Very Good Thing!

Churches that break the 1,000 barrier have unlocked the super-secret that getting more people plugged into the church service drives the growth in attendance. **People who are committed enough to the church to volunteer are thus bought into**

the Ministry vision and are willing to invest their most prized possession - time. Prevailing churches are looking for more ways to get the congregation plugged into the service and similarly a thriving Kids' Ministry requires lots (and lots) of volunteers to make it happen.

Three things result in the process when someone decides to volunteer within your Kid's Ministry:

- **Understand the Vision** // Serving in the Kids' Ministry in your church is a totally selfless act, which requires a strong connection between the vision of the church and the individual's personal action. Only churches with a high level of vision casting at work are normally able to convert volunteers into this area. A growing Kids' Ministry volunteer team implies that the church is thriving at explaining the "big why" behind everything they do which in turns drives the growth of the church.
- **They Tell Their Friends** // Once someone starts to volunteer in your Kids' Ministry they are bound to tell their friends. They've gone beyond just merely attending the church to making a conscious and willing decision to invest time, effort and energy into the church. The accompanying sense of accomplishment and pride is high, which

in turn drives these individuals to share the Kids' Ministry idea with their friends. We know that the church grows when people tell their friends about it and this gives another excuse for the people of your church to talk and share with their friends.

- **Kids' Ministry Improves!** // There is a positive upward spiral effect of adding more volunteers to your Kid's Ministry. As more people start to initiate, get involved and serve - the ministry starts to improve and become even better, which in turn encourages more people to serve. This marked improvement drives more and deeper engagement with this aspect of your ministry, with increasing number of people joining the team.

I've seen lots of churches where the Kids' Ministry department is somewhere around 50% of the total volunteer team. Growing your Kids' Ministry team persuades people to see your church because it will help you engage a higher number of people in the mission of the church.

Kids' Ministry is All About The Next Generation

Effective Kids' Ministries are all about impacting the next generation. This sort of "next generation" thinking gets inherently woven into the fabric of the church as each generation turns to draw in the next. In the end, this drives innovation at the largest scale of the church. The focus being: "How we are going to reach those people who aren't here yet?" **Churches that break the 1,000 barrier are obsessed to reach people who the church isn't serving yet and thus remain out of the reach of the church. Correspondingly, the next generation modeling that happens in Kids' Ministry is vitally important for the health of the church.**



In fact, many churches look to establishing a structure, wherein one "generation" serves the next "generation" throughout their entire family ministry. (College students serve high school students who in turn serve middle school students who then serve elementary students.) On a micro-generation level, this patterning is a powerful example to optimally exemplify to the entire church body of: "what we all should be doing." **Churches that don't actively grapple with reaching the next generation will invariably become irreversibly stuck.** A thriving Kids' Ministry is a tangible way for your church to live out this value.

Kids' Ministry Leverages the "Disney Effect"

When I was in college I worked for a brief stint with the Disney Corporation. What a learning experience it was! I was always a fan of the movies and theme parks produced by this company but catching a small glimpse of the company from the "inside" instilled in me an all-together new love their execution and strategy. Early on, when I started, I was in a team training, during which one of the trainers made an offhanded comment about how "family movies" was a practical business decision because typically families go together to movies. **The trainer categorically reflected on the fact that movies with more "mature" themes are typically only attended by couples, in order to "convince" more individual groups to attend.** Similarly, family movies draw more people in family groups to the movies. Simple and straightforward, the concept seemed like such an obvious point but it stuck with me for a long time.

Thriving churches often have amazing Kids' Ministries that drive entire families to attend together as one. **I've joked in the past with friends who don't attend our church that they better not bring their kids to our program because they'll love it so much that they'll be bugging the parents to take them to service every week.** This axiom is true in many churches who have broken the 1,000 barrier. Their Kids' Ministry is a growth driver that propels the people eager to attend the service together.

A number of years ago, I was standing at the back of the room of one of the thriving

churches' Kids' Ministry and was moved to tears by what I witnessed. This ministry was performing at a level that I had never seen before. (And, if I recall, haven't really seen since.) It was moving to see such a blessing in motion because I was struck that if I was a complete pagan, I would bring my kids to this ministry! I was moved to see this church investing so heavily to ensure that entire families are impacted with the message of Jesus!

Kids' Ministry Fosters Creative Leaders

The "big C" Church needs more creative leaders. When 94% of all churches are losing ground against the growth of the communities they serve, it is an impending need to have more leaders with a creative thinking. [ref] **Closer to home, your church needs more creative leaders.** Only 2% of churches will ever break the 1,000 barrier, which means that you need fringe solutions to help and concurrently enable your church to achieve this objective. You need to forge a path that few churches have ever accomplished. You need a constant supply of fresh insights and ideas to spur the growth. Correspondingly, the Kids' Ministry people continue to be some of the most creative people in your church.

Kids' Ministry leaders are typically exposed to real constraints, which makes them creative problem solvers. They are used to getting the job done with less because of the demands of their particular ministry area. They are also used to working to actively engage their audience. This is because if you've experienced a roomful of bored 3rd graders, you know that you never want to be in that mess again. Kids' Ministry leaders are a source of fresh innovation and ministry. **Often as a church grows, the leadership teams of the church find themselves elevating these leaders to overall roles in the ministry because of the proven innovation track record.**



Finally, as a church breaks the 1,000 barrier you need to develop a number of leadership development pipelines. These pipelines are delivering "ready to deploy" leaders who can propel pieces of the ministry to new levels. Kids' Ministry is a logical place to look for the rising leaders. **In fact, you should be looking to encourage and deploy leaders who have "developed their chops" in this area to move into other areas of ministry within the church.** Kids' Ministry provides a logical source of leaders to spread throughout the entire church and achieve more for the church as you grow beyond the 1,000 barrier.

Kids' Ministry Can Be a Growth Cap

When questioned about what growth caps might exist in a church, it has been observed that often times the lead pastor will mention the size of the auditorium or maybe parking. Growing churches are aware that Kids' Ministry can easily be that capacity block, which needs to be freed up. You won't be able to see it from the main stage but if the nursery is packed way too full or there is no place for 5th graders to hang their coats, the families won't come back. **Often the cap is more subtle than just filled seats or parking lot spots and so the church needs to pay close attention to these details.** Parents will sacrifice their own spiritual development for their kids and if the Kids' Ministry department seems "overfull" they won't come back because it doesn't feel like a quality experience.

Here are some capacities to look at closely when considering if your Kids' Ministry is holding back the growth of your church:

- **Child: Team Member Ratios** // If this number is too high and all kids are not being served personally you need to work hard to get more team members inducted into the ministry.
- **Stroller Parking is Full** // Similar to car parking, if there is no place for strollers to be dropped off during the service, the parents will be slow to return.
- **Hallway Crazyness Factor** // It should feel fun and exciting but not frazzled and stressed during the drop-off and pick up. Watch the crazyness factor closely!

- **Crawlers crawling everywhere!** // If parents look in on a crawling toddlers room and it looks like ants on a piece of caramel corn, definitely it's time to grow your kid's space.



The best way to judge these issues is to dedicate time, stop and talk with parents as they come and go from your church. Ask them to share with you their opinion on how “full” the Kids’ Ministry feels. Once you have spoken with a dozen parents, you’ll start to pick up on patterns of the way the parents feel about the various aspects of Kid’s ministry. Churches that break the 1,000 barrier keep a close eye on the capacity of their kid ministry to ensure that lots of space is made available to grow as both in the short term and long run!

Looking for more help breaking the 1,000 barrier? Check out these downloadable resources.

I’ve helped churches like yours as they look to grow beyond the 1,000 barrier and along the way I’ve been pulling together a series of PDF discussion guides to use with the teams. Download these PDFs and share them with your staff and key volunteers to spur conversation on what changes your church will need to undertake to break the 1,000 barrier.

7 Pivots Churches Make to Break the 1,000 Barrier

What changes are common in the churches that are able to break the 1,000 barrier and

move to new levels of impact? These seven areas explore the specific key points that your church might consider to shift and change in the weeks and months to come.

5 Characteristics of Church Staff Teams that Break the 1,000 Barrier

We all know with the growth of the church beyond 1,000 the staff team begins plays a vitally important and extensive role. This resource looks at the team culture of churches that are able to break the 1,000 barrier. These focus on detailing a helpful conversation starter as your team considers how it might need to grow and change.

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