

# DIRECTIONS

NEWSLETTER FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

## Discipleship...

to know HIM is to be with HIM

SPRING/SUMMER

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Amazing, isn't it, that God wants to be with you and me? Centuries ago, Jesus made clear an abiding principle of discipleship, knowledge is gained by association before it is understood by explanation. Jesus had a purpose for spending time with His disciples. It was by being with Him they came to know the "mysteries of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 8:10). When Thomas asked Jesus, "How can we know the way?", Jesus simply replied, "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE" (John 14:6). True discipleship can only be accomplished by spending time with Jesus Christ

*It is a profound realization that all the puzzles of our lives can be solved by staying close to Jesus.*

There were certainly many things these men did not understand-- things they freely acknowledged as they walked with Jesus. But all of their mysteries were brought into clarity as they followed Him. In His presence the disciples could learn all that they needed to know. Does it baffle you, as it does me, that God wants to spend time with us? It is a profound realization that all the puzzles of our lives can be solved by staying close to Jesus. As the early disciples learned, we, too, must spend time with Jesus; we must be devoted disciples of our Lord.

This principle, which was applied from the start of Jesus' ministry, is found in Mark 3:14, "That they might be with him." He added, of course, that He was going to send them out "to preach, and to have authority to drive out demons" (Mark 3:15). Often we fail to realize what came first. Jesus made it clear that before these were "to preach" or "to cast out devils," they were to be WITH HIM. In fact, this personal appointment to be in constant association with Him was as much a part of their commission as the authority to evangelize. Indeed, it was more important. Discipleship is necessary preparation for evangelism. Jesus knew that those intimate moments of teaching, from the feeding of the five thousand to the withered fig tree, would become the foundation from which they would go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world.

We cannot evangelize without first being disciples. We cannot successfully build the church of Jesus Christ without effectively building other disciples. If we evangelize without discipleship, we are only doing half the job. Global evangelism is a great plan which should be pursued in concert with God's great process of discipleship. This issue of *Directions* focuses on outreach and evangelism. Taking care of Kingdom business means doing both well.



Rick Wulfestieg  
National Minister of  
Christian Education

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# casting the net

## kids reaching kids for Jesus

*Jesus expected His disciples to impact other people with the truth of the gospel. He hoped that they would bring their friends to the truth of His love. The far-reaching effect of the good news began with one friend's talking to another. This is the essence of friendship evangelism which will be the focus of our efforts this year.*

*This fall, the National Department of Christian Education will launch an evangelism project that will include a variety of practical and inspirational ideas to introduce others to Jesus. Among the ideas shared in this packet will be "Casting the Net," a program which is part of the vision of Paul Duris. This program focuses on training children to reach their friends with the gospel. Paul's inspirational account of receiving this vision will motivate you to seek the Lord for your own vision of reaching people for Jesus.*

Growing up in the state of Washington, I learned many things about farming. I saw that certain times of the year were better for spraying for disease. There were also specific windows of time for harvesting. I learned that the delay of a single day could make all the difference at harvest time.

There are strategic spiritual seasons for reaching people for Christ. Children are, by nature, receptive to Jesus. According to Barna Research Group, the greatest evangelistic window is among young children between the ages of 5 and 13.

I came across this information last spring and posted it on the wall next to my desk. I pondered it from time to time. Then, one day, like a bolt of lightning, this truth struck my heart: Childhood is the window, and it's God's season of harvest.

Rev. Paul Duris, Children's Pastor, East Hill Foursquare Church and part-time National Children's Ministry Coach.

As I was praying, I saw a vision of a net being cast out from a boat into the sea. It was not a net made of rope but of children. As this unusual net sank, the hands of children began to catch hold of those who were lost in the ocean's depths.

I began to tell the kids, "You're a net! If you're following Jesus, He will help you become a fisherman for God. There's an ocean of kids out there in your school and neighborhood who need Jesus. If you bring them to church, they'll get saved."

During our Easter services, the kids brought their friends. Almost a thousand grade-school kids came to the services, and from this group, 166 kids gave their hearts to Christ. The net was working! Prayer partners met with each of the kids who responded. They celebrated with them, affirmed them and prayed over them. Their job was to help kids walk with a confidence in Jesus.

Watching a few hundred kids get saved was

awesome, but, deep inside, my heart cried: "God, give me more; I want to do more for You." In July, I took out a piece of paper and wrote the following words; "1,000 kids in the year 2000." I prayed, "Lord if you could use us to reach 1,000 kids, it would thrill my heart." That day the Lord placed a

quiet confidence in my spirit that this was God's goal, not mine.

In July, we spread a fishing net over boxes containing 1,000 booklets entitled *The Most Important Story*. As the children placed their hands on the boxes, we prayed, "Jesus, empty these boxes. Save a thousand kids this year. Help us be a net for you."

During the rest of the summer we focused on evangelism. We set up an outdoor stage and conducted midweek services for children called, "Summer Splash." We created a "kid friendly" environment with water games, fun, worship, and a creative salvation message. Each night, at least 30 to 40 children responded to an invitation.

While the children's center had become a base for evangelism and we were on our way to reaching our dream of 1,000 kids, I realized that we were missing an integral part of "Casting the Net." The missing strategy was training kids to share their faith with their friends. We modeled six simple ways to share their faith and equipped them with a small pocket "tackle box" and sent them out.

Soon, stories of playground conversions began to come in. One eight-year-old took me to his playground at school where he talked to kids about God. He shared, "Well, my friend told me that he didn't know Jesus. He said that his mom and dad have been talking about becoming Christians. I asked him and he said, 'Yeah, I really want to be a Christian.' So I prayed with him. A couple of days later, another friend did the same thing. Later, I led two other

people to Christ at the same spot. Then their brothers and sisters wanted to know Christ, and I kind of talked to them too. Now there are eight kids that have become Christians."

We cheered from the sidelines as kids spoke out with boldness. Eighty-seven kids from the playgrounds, neighborhoods, and day care centers came to know Jesus.

We placed the names of all the kids who received Jesus as their Savior on a special display in the church foyer. At the end of the year, the final count was 1,039.

I believe this is just the beginning and an indication of what God can do. If, through our efforts, we reached more than 1,000 kids for Jesus, what could we do across the nation?

Now is the time for the Church to intentionally target the most responsive people in America, the children. Jesus, the Lord of the harvest said, "Let the little children come to me ...for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).

## Tools To Help Kids Witness

### CATCH THE VISION

This issue of Directions focuses on evangelism and discipleship. In Mark 10:14, Jesus made it clear that children need to come to Him. We believe that children can come to know Jesus. We also believe that many children can evangelize--given the proper educational and spiritual formation.

Jesus spent three years of His life teaching the disciples and using everyday occurrences to impart spiritual truth. He taught them so that they would become a significant part of spreading the Gospel and changing the world. Second only to the Savior, Himself, they were the most important tool for effectively sharing the Gospel.

When Jesus was rejected, ridiculed and crucified, the disciples became fearful and timid. They didn't understand the purpose of His death. They had forgotten His prophetic words regarding their future because the immediate circumstances got in the way.

When they realized He had overcome death, the disciples began to truly "know" the Savior they served, the Savior they needed to reveal to others. It was only when they received the infilling power of the Holy Spirit that they became bold in their approach to share Jesus.

Paul Duris, Children's Pastor at East Hill Foursquare Church, shared his vision of

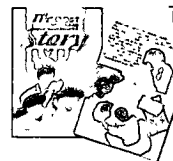
the great field of children ready to know Jesus. He told about the many children who went out and told their friends about their loving, powerful Savior. These children shared the Good News because they had been taught the Good News. Paul Duris taught the children in his church about Jesus and about their individual relationships with Jesus.

### PREPARE THE WAY

We all need practical tools to help us effectively convey the Gospel. Children will share Jesus differently based on their Bible training, the family environment, and culture. As you train children to become evangelists, help them see, as Jesus did with the disciples, that they are a very significant part of spreading the Gospel. They are perhaps the most important tool for bringing their friends to Jesus.

The following ideas are just a few which will be included in a notebook to be released in fall 2001. This notebook will take the best methods and ideas from various children's evangelism organizations and churches like East Hill Foursquare Church. As you review the following ideas, and the ideas in the upcoming notebook, consider the needs of the children you teach and customize your training to those needs. Call or e-mail our office for further information.

### The Most Important Story Ever Told



This is an excellent tool to share the gospel message with children. This booklet, published by Worldserve Ministries, brings the gospel message alive and allows

children to understand the love of Christ. The graphics are top quality. It is currently printed in more than 70 languages. At 33 cents a copy, it is affordable for any church. You may download a copy of the tract from Worldserve's website. Contact Worldserve ministries at [www.worldserve.org](http://www.worldserve.org) or phone them at (800) 414-7788

**Project 1:8** is a series of four lesson plans written by the Foursquare National Christian Education Office. While these lessons lead up to a final service that includes showing "The Story of Jesus for Children" video, the lessons, without the video, are an excellent training tool that help children understand: the call to evangelize; the people they are to evangelize, and ways they can evangelize. It can be downloaded from the Christian Education website and it will be one of the options in the forthcoming training notebook.

**Casting The Net** is a curriculum developed by Paul Duris to train the children in his church. This program contains a series of skits and teaching moments that help children use the "Pocket Tackle Box" mentioned in Paul Duris' article. It will also be available on the website and in the notebook.



# Evangelizing Today's Families

One of the latest currents running through the Church is "family ministry." In the past, parents were the primary Christian educators; now, the majority of that responsibility has fallen to the Church. While many people lament this revolution, it has become a major social and spiritual issue that must be addressed by the Church. As indicated by figures from the 2000 census, the number of families led by women with no husband present grew nearly three times faster in the 1990's than the number of married couples with children. One-half of all single moms receive no child support. In addition, half of all children involved do not see their fathers on a regular basis. To add to this dilemma, seventy percent of single-parent mothers live in poverty (less than \$13,000 annually). The census also revealed that less than 25 percent of all U.S. households consisted of married couples with children. This is a startling revelation and should cause the Church to rethink the way it ministers to the families both within its walls and in the community.

According to John Erwin of The National Association of Family Ministries, some of the most pressing needs of the single parent family are: fatigue, finances, child care, and transportation. Ways in which churches could meet these needs include: offering spiritual and emotional support; providing affordable, quality child care; teaching classes on parenting, presenting workshops on how to file income taxes or manage money; having local bike and car clinics based on need; supplying food and clothing resources; and providing role models and mentors for children.

In Matthew 10:42, Jesus explained to His disciples, "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." Jesus not only attracts children, but also, He blesses them. He builds a positive relationship with them. The children came to know Jesus. As we read through the New Testament, it is obvious that these children grew up and helped evangelize others through the work of the Early Church. But how will children in today's society see Jesus? How will the Church attract them? How will it bless them? The answer to these questions will depend on how the Church evangelizes and trains these "little ones." Family ministries include caring for the children.

This "servant evangelism" can mobilize the people in your church to share the love of Christ. In today's culture, it is not enough to tell people about the love of God; rather, they want to see it. Many of these parents are experiencing pain from bad decisions they have made, from rejection, and from living in a fallen world that does not comprehend God's acceptance, forgiveness, and love.

Whether your church's ministry is to single-parent families, two-parent families, families giving care to an elderly parent, or to blended families, the Church is challenged to obey what God's Word clearly says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10 NIV).

- Patti Wulfestieg

To learn of practical ways to reach the families in your community, visit [www.servantevangelism.com](http://www.servantevangelism.com). There is also a new book available entitled, 101 Ways to Reach Your Community For Christ authored by Steve Sjogren.

## Parent Follow-Up

Keep parents connected to their babies' spiritual development with this idea. If you use a nursery curriculum, choose your favorite activity from the day's lesson and describe it in a short paragraph. Write it so it fits on a quarter sheet of paper, and fit four to a page. Photocopy these on brightly colored paper, cut them apart, and tuck one into each diaper bag before the babies leave. Parents will enjoy finding these little cards so they can repeat the activities with their babies later in the week. For extra impact, photocopy an encouraging quote, a quick parenting tip, or a meaningful Scripture on the back of each card.

Used with permission Children's Ministry Magazine, Group Publishing, Inc. January/February 2001

**T**rain travel may soon be a thing of the past, an etching in peoples' memories. Unless Amtrak becomes solvent by the end of 2002, its government subsidy may stop. Amtrak is hard pressed to come up with a means of attracting passengers back to trains. Some dramatic innovations are taking place, such as the introduction of faster trains. In short, Amtrak has to change its image to win the younger traveler.

In a similar manner, the Church, consisting of an older generation of believers, is going to have to change its image if it is to draw the younger generation to faith in Christ. People have stated that they do not want to hear what the church believes; they want to SEE what the church believes.

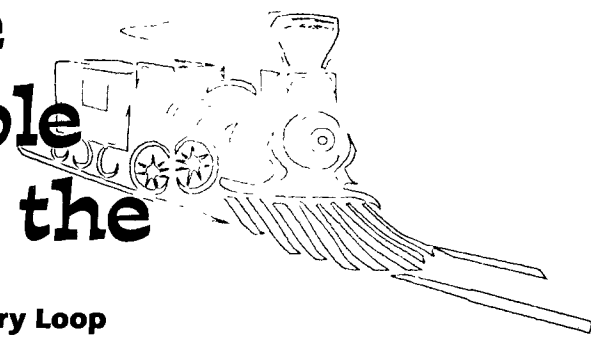
I was hit with this realization while riding Amtrak back from a Christian Education conference in Utah. A young lady was sitting in the dining car. It was Sunday and when the conversation came around to church, she remarked, "Why would anyone want to go to church? When I was a child and attended church all I saw was a lot of bickering and power plays. Except for its social work, the church has no relevance whatsoever." Tragically, this is how the majority of the younger generation views Christianity. Unless current trends change, it is predicted that only about 4% of children now will ever become Christians. The younger generation desperately needs to see the reality of Jesus lived out. Therefore, if the Church is to reach the future generations in a life changing way, it is going to have to reach today's believers in a life changing way.

**Unless current trends change, it is predicted that only about 4% of children now will ever become Christians.**

While the quality of preaching has improved with the increased availability to study materials, the Sunday morning sermon does not seem to provide adults with a solid understanding of the whole Bible. The results are seen in statistics that tell us there are little difference between Christians and non-Christians. Forty-seven percent of born again Christians do not even believe in the existence of satan

# How Come More People Don't Ride the Train?

Rev. Gary Loop



as a living being (Barna 2000)\*. The divorce rate is actually a little worse among born again Christians than unbelievers (Barna 2000)\*. No wonder the younger generation looks at the Church and says that it is not relevant. Only Christ can change people's lives, but if people do not know how the Bible relates to their lives, how are they going to be transformed? This is where adult Christian education comes in. Whether it is through a small group study, traditional Sunday school, or Bible Institutes, a greater impartation of biblical truth must be conveyed to adults.

Perhaps this is why Alpha has grown so much in the past decade. It is a tool for both evangelizing and helping people understand basic Bible truth relevant to their lives. God's Word must penetrate the lives of adults, or it will never have a lasting effect on the younger generation that longs to SEE rather hear what the Church believes.

The situation certainly is not hopeless. There was another generation that was worse. Traditional religion had lost almost all relevance to life and was having little impact on society. Into that situation, God sent His Son, and the world has never been the same. Jesus brought truth that could change a person's lifestyle. The younger generation needs to witness the same thing today. The people of this generation need to see Jesus lived out in the lives of those who are older. This doesn't mean that they are looking for perfection. They are looking for people who are overcoming their weaknesses and becoming better people. They want true role models instead of people who make excuses for their mistakes or who continually transfer blame.

Richard Foster in *Spiritual Renewal in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* states that the next great reformation of the Church will focus on growing in God's grace where a believer's lifestyle will be noticeably changed to be much more like Jesus. As mankind gets closer to the second coming of Christ, there will be a greater number of Christ followers living exemplary lives before their fellow man (Daniel 12:3). This will lead to a greater number of future generations embracing faith in Jesus as they see that difference.

The young lady in the dining car on the train made the statement, "I don't see many young people on the train. If they only realized how much fun it is and how relaxing it is, I'm sure many more young people would travel by train." If things continue as they are, the church will not see many young people come through its doors. However, if these younger people can see the reality of Christ lived out in those that are older, they will see that the Church is relevant, that it does make a difference, and they will want to be a part of it. As a member of the older generation, my heart's cry is "Oh God, help me to constantly be growing and changing into what you want me to be. Let young people see something of Jesus in me." I may not be able to change the whole world, but, with God's help and a greater knowledge of the Bible, I can make a difference in the immediate world that I live in every day. I can help impact at least part of the younger generation for Jesus.

(For more information about Alpha, log on to their web site at [www.alphana.org](http://www.alphana.org) or phone Gary Loop at 213-989-4279.)

\*Barna Research Group, Ltd. at [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)

Gary Loop is a former Foursquare pastor and missionary. He currently serves as the Christian Education Resource Editor for adult training.

## friend-making and future-thinking

Kids are clumpers. When they get together with friends, they're far more likely to connect with a tribe (65% socialize with a group of peers) than a Tonto (28% connect with one or two close friends). And only a smattering remain Lone Rangers (just 7% prefer to spend most of their time alone).

All this is mined from a massive new survey by the Horatio Alger Association, which also found that nearly two-thirds (62%) of all teenagers plan to attend a four-year college or university. Just over a quarter of them (27%) will shun college and jump into the workforce after graduation, and about a tenth of them (12%) say they'll enroll in a two-year college. What else will they be doing after they toss the tassel? Kids plan to...

- travel (9%)
- attend a training or vocational school (8%)
- join the armed forces (7%); and
- join a volunteer organization (3%)

Finally, about one in seven (14%) don't have a clue what they're going to do.

Also, teenagers picked an unlikely trio for their top career choices--developing computer software, practicing medicine, and teaching all tied as kids' favorite future jobs.

Used with permission. "Friend-making and Future-thinking" Group Magazine March 4, 2001 Loveland, CO

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# Traveling Sunday School

Here's a wonderful way to expose families to your church and show them God's love.

Once each month of the summer, we take Sunday school to the kids at a nearby apartment complex. First, we check with the complex to find out if we can hold our event, and then we cover the complex with fliers to let residents know which Sunday we'll come. We start at 10 a.m. and use a different theme each month, such as a carnival or western theme. We serve doughnuts and juice to help bring out kids, and then we play games and do crafts. We present the gospel each time.

We use this activity as a springboard to invite the kids to Vacation Bible School and our Wednesday night program. When we did this last, many children trusted Christ during our VBS!

This article was submitted by Janna Worthman, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Used with permission Children's Ministry Magazine, Group Publishing, Inc. ¢ May/June 2001.

## Did You Know?

- Location of the Christian church with the largest attendance: Korea; dominate religion in Korea: Buddhism
- Location of the world's second-largest Christian church: Nigeria; dominate religion in Nigeria: Islam
- Location of the world's largest Buddhist temple: United States
- Location of the world's largest Muslim training center: United States
- Country with the world's largest Jewish population: United States
- Location of the world's largest training center for Transcendental Meditation: United States

(Used with permission Children's Ministry Magazine, Group Publishing, Inc. May/June 2001, "Lost in America" by Tom Clegg and Warren Bird)

### I Want My MTV



"I go to the MTV awards and I feel old. MTV's demographic is now literally 12-year-olds." – Comic actor Ben Stiller (Meet the Parents) reinforcing what culture analysts have contended for years—that the sexually preoccupied cable network is targeting its programming at preteens.

Excerpted from Plugged In A Resource from Focus on the Family; original quote appeared in Entertainment Weekly, 10/13/00

### Bible Reading



Bible reading has decreased over the last two decades, according to a Gallup poll. In the '80s, 73% of the general population claimed to read the Bible at least occasionally. Now just 59% makes that claim, and regular readers—once a week or more—have dropped to 37%. Of those surveyed, 35% said they are very interested in deepening their understanding of the Bible, and 14% said they're part of a Bible study group.

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