



YOU CAN HAVE A  
PRINCIPLE-BASED  
PRESCHOOL  
MINISTRY

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This booklet is a new work in the sense that I have never seen a compilation of the principles on which so much of preschool ministry is based. On the other hand, it is not new. It is the accumulation of education, experience, and mentoring through the years of my ministry. I have read many books and heard many preschool leaders voice these principles on countless occasions through the years. Therefore, I wish to express my appreciation to every person who has contributed to my life and to the work of preschool ministry in our Baptist churches.



## ***All Decisions and Procedures Are Based on What Is Best for the Preschoolers.***

I treasure the Bible verse, "Children are a heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Since our children are God's gift to us, we should do all we can to nurture and protect this gift. We should provide the very best learning environment possible. All that we do should be for the "nurture and admonition" of the children in our care. The Preschool Ministry exists for the benefit of the preschoolers (ages birth through kindergarten.) On the other hand, the Preschool Ministry does *not* exist for the convenience of the parents or teachers. When decisions are based on this principle, a simple question can be asked: "What is best for the children?" The answer needs to be based on careful consideration of the issue in question. Often, what is best for the children may not be what is most convenient for parents or simplest for teachers. But, if we are committed to the best for our preschoolers, we should be willing to base our process on this principle as we develop policies and procedures and make decisions.

### **Principle 1 Influences:**

#### ***Teaching/Baby-sitting***

In many churches, preschoolers are loved, cared for, and taught from a planned curriculum every time they are at church. This includes Sunday mornings and evenings, Wednesday evening activities, weekday ministries such as Mother's Day Out, and all other times the preschoolers are at church. In other churches, preschoolers are loved and cared for, but that is as far as it goes. Sometimes it seems easier to find a person who will "watch the children" and keep them quiet in another room so the adult activities are not disturbed. Ask yourself, "What is best for the children?" I believe you will agree that foundational teaching is certainly better than mere babysitting. If you agree, then you will recognize the necessity of recruiting appropriate teachers, providing curriculum materials, offering teacher equipping, and making teaching supplies available.

#### ***Security and Safety***

What is best for the children when security and safety are considered? Certainly the children should be protected from potential abuse, from the possibility of child-snatching, and from preventable accidents. This means that screening potential teachers and eliminating those who may have a questionable background or motive is essential. It also means that a system for linking each child to his parent or guardian is necessary. (A friend's daughter was turned over to her non-custodial father by a church preschool teacher, and the friend was involved in searches and court proceedings for two long years before the child was returned to her.) Often, accidents may be prevented through selecting the right equipment for the age-group, and by diligently inspecting and maintaining furniture and equipment. Safety concerns include all indoor equipment as well as outdoor equipment and play areas. Care is given to avoid hidden hazards such as foods that can choke, allergens, and poisonous plants.

### ***Hygiene Practices***

The preschool area ought to be "hospital clean." This means that linens are washed each time they are used. Toys are disinfected (1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 gallon of water) before, during, and after each session. Teachers protect from the spread of germs through the use of rubber gloves for diaper-changing as well as for handling body fluids such as nasal drainage and blood from a cut or scrape. Parents are asked to remain outside the door to eliminate tracking of debris from shoes on the floor where preschoolers crawl and/or play. As a safeguard to the spread of infectious diseases, children are required to be clear of fever at least twenty-four hours prior to coming to church. Parents are notified and asked to take home a child who becomes ill during a session.

### ***Curriculum Choices***

Curriculum for the various ministries of the preschool area should be chosen with great care. The curriculum greatly influences the spiritual foundation being laid in the life of the child. Several questions may be asked to help evaluate curriculum materials:

- Are the words, concepts, and activities within the understanding of the child?
- Is a variety of teaching methods included?
- Do methods allow for active, rather than passive, learning?
- Do methods encourage hands-on experiences with real objects?
- Does the child do the activity (rather than the teacher doing it for the child)?
- Is the curriculum Bible-based and biblically accurate?
- Is the curriculum consistent with Southern Baptist doctrine?

### ***Teaching Methods and Toys***

Michelle (age 3) said, "Aunt Sue, I'm not very good at that sitting-still part." God created children to be active! Therefore, teaching methods should take advantage of the opportunity to teach Bible truths as the children move about the room, experimenting with and exploring carefully chosen materials. Good curriculum materials give suggestions for appropriate methods and materials. Toys should be selected for their value in teaching. Inappropriate toys (such as "action figures," toy guns, or books and puzzles which have no teaching value) should not be in a preschool room. When you are committed to do the best for the preschoolers, you are willing to be selective in the toys and material for learning that you provide your children.

### ***Furnishings and Decor***

A good room for preschoolers is not only clean and safe, but is also decorated so that the best learning can take place. Resist the urge to paint walls with murals or bright, bold colors. Instead, select a light, neutral color and paint the walls this solid color. When teaching pictures or other aids are put on the wall for a session, they can be easily noticed and provide an opportunity for teaching. Likewise, avoid decorator cribs (such as "Jenny Lind") and instead, provide sturdy hospital-type metal cribs. Remove all adult-size furnishings from the room, with the exception of one or perhaps two rocking chairs in a room for babies. Don't hang curtains on the windows; they obstruct the view of God's beautiful world as well as harbor dust and germs. Instead, use washable blinds for control of light when necessary, making sure that the cords are secured well above the reach of preschoolers.

### ***Video/Computer Use By Preschoolers***

Research is now in progress on the value of video and computer use by young children. As you consider these approaches to teaching, ask yourself:

- What will the child gain?
- Is the video/computer providing a firsthand experience?
- Would the child benefit more from his relationship to a person rather than a machine?
- Are you tempted to use video tapes as baby-sitters rather than plan firsthand learning experiences?

Until research shows otherwise, my personal preference is to provide many enriching hands-on experiences for the preschoolers. For example, I believe it is best for a group of preschoolers to squeeze oranges to make their own orange juice rather than to play a computer game in which they only see an orange on the screen or watch a video of someone else making orange juice.

### ***Rotating Teachers***

A current trend seems to be for adults to rotate as "teachers" in preschool rooms. I will admit that perhaps it is more convenient for an adult to "help" once a month instead of every week. However, one of the basic ways preschoolers learn is through their consistent relationship with significant adults. Because teachers are so important to preschoolers, the best teaching occurs when the same teacher is present each week, providing continuity and deepening the child/teacher relationship. When teachers rotate, they do not build on the previous session. Also, preschoolers cannot trust that a familiar person will be in the room. Often, preschoolers cry every time an unfamiliar rotating teacher arrives. Through their behavior, they are telling us that they need familiar, loving teachers every time they are at the church house. Adults who truly want what is best for preschoolers will be willing to make the commitment to teach regularly rather than occasionally.



### ***Preschool Rooms, Furnishings, and Supplies Belong to the Children Assigned to the Room.***

Church members plan and build space for the various ministries of the church. Often, there is a room designed and equipped specifically for the choir and music ministry. There is sometimes another space set aside for meal preparation and for church family fellowship. Always, there is a space for corporate worship. Likewise, there should be a space set aside for the care and teaching of preschoolers. This space is "given" to the preschoolers by the church, and it "belongs" to them in the sense that everything within that space is for the best possible care and teaching.

### **Principle 2 Influences:**

#### ***Use of Rooms, Cabinet Space, and Furnishings***

Since the room is assigned to a specific age of children, it is not used by other age groups. For example, if it is assigned to Babies-Two's, then grade-school children and even older preschoolers are taught in another area. The materials in the storage cabinets are for the use of the specific age groups. It is not necessary to have one set of cabinets full of materials for Sunday morning, and a different cabinet for Sunday night or weekday ministries. To be sure, each ministry needs a space for storage of specific items unique to that ministry, but the majority of resources are available for use any time the preschoolers are at the church house. Furnishings, too, are available for the children any time they come to church. Since they belong to the children assigned to the room, it is not appropriate for a teacher to say something like "That's Miss Sally's easel. You may paint when she is here." Instead, the easel should be regarded as the children's, which they may use whenever they are at church (and the curriculum plan suggests easel painting).

#### ***Loud Speakers***

Many years ago, the invention of "loud speakers" made it possible to hear activities occurring in another place. Some people thought it would be beneficial *to the workers* to place loud speakers in preschool rooms. That way, the workers could listen to the worship service while they "watched" the children. However, according to this principle, the room and furnishings belong to the children, not the teachers. Speakers are for teachers. Preschoolers do not benefit from speakers; instead, they are deprived of valuable relationships and teaching while the adults in the room listen to an adult-level service. Go back to Principle 1, What is best for the preschoolers? Is it best for the preschoolers to have teachers who are devoting their time and attention to them? Or, is it best for preschoolers to be "watched" while workers' attention is on the voices booming from the loud speaker? If you have speakers in your preschool room, my personal recommendation is to remove them so that everything in the room is for the benefit of the preschoolers.

#### ***Ministries Assigned to Use the Rooms***

When the church designates a room for a particular age-group, all ministries that use the room should be for that age child. For example, this means that GA's (for grade-school girls) do not use an unoccupied room for preschoolers. The GA's should meet in a room set aside for gradeschool-age children, where the furnishings and supplies are appropriate to their own age group. Ministries which should meet in preschool rooms are preschool Sunday School and Discipleship Training, preschool Mission Friends, preschool music activities (or choir), preschool Mothers' Day Out, and preschool weekday ministries.

## ***Everything in the Room Relates to the Ministry and Session in Progress.***

Preschoolers are easily distracted by irrelevant materials or furnishings. The best teaching can take place when everything in the room supports the ministry and session in progress. Look at your room, and determine which items are used by all who meet in the room. In a room for older preschoolers, your answer may include items such as blocks; homeliving furniture, dolls, and dishes; and basic art supplies such as paper, crayons, and scissors. Other items, which relate to a specific session, should be set out for the children's use and then put back into the supply cabinet or resource room until they are needed again. Items which are nearly always unique to a session include block accessories (Sunday school may utilize farm animals, but Mission Friends may need community helper figures); dress-up clothes in the home/dramatic play area; books and puzzles; and music recordings and/or instruments. All teachers should follow the same procedure of providing materials needed for the specific session and then removing those materials so the room will be ready for the next ministry to set out its unique materials.

## **Principle 3 Influences:**

### ***Permanent Decoration***

A mural painted on a wall cannot relate to every session. Nor can pictures or posters which are framed and permanently mounted. Instead, teaching pictures, posters, and other items used for teaching should be displayed and then removed. Permanent decorations should be left outside the room. For example, a bulletin board for parents might be located in the preschool hallway.

### ***Set-up and Take-down Process***

Teachers from all preschool ministries who use the room work together to enable each ministry to be effective. This means that teachers provide specific materials such as books, puzzles, unique art materials, and block accessories as suggested in their curriculum. At the end of the session, they remove all of these materials so that the next ministry using the room may set up its own materials. In addition to enabling every ministry to provide the best teaching environment, this take-down process has the added benefit of preventing the room from becoming cluttered with materials that accumulate week after week.



## ***Decisions Are Based on Church-approved Policies.***

A mother reported to her child's teacher: "Terri is at home with her daddy this morning. She seems OK now, but she ran a fever yesterday, and the policy says she should be free of fever 24 hours, so I didn't want to take a chance." Thank goodness the church had approved this policy and the parent followed it. The next day, Monday, Terri was hospitalized with meningitis and would have exposed countless children and teachers if she had attended Sunday School. Developing and seeking church approval for preschool policies can be a long and sometimes tedious task; yet the existence of policies provides a basis for making countless decisions. Policies and procedures should govern expectations of teachers, parents, and the church family.

## **Principle 4 Influences:**

### ***Existence of a Preschool Committee/Team***

The church should elect a preschool committee/team comprised of one to three preschool leaders, a deacon/elder, a finance committee member, a parent of preschoolers, and a church staff member such as the Minister of Education or Preschool Minister. One task of this committee/team is to develop policies and present them to the church for formal adoption. Once the policies are adopted, decisions may be made based on the policy rather than what any one individual thinks or feels. When an exception to a policy is requested, the preschool committee/team would be called upon to deliberate and decide what is best for the preschoolers involved. If necessary, the preschool committee/team may take a change in policy to the church for adoption.

### ***Promotion and Distribution of Written Policies***

Policies do no good if people do not know about them. Once the policies have been adopted by the church, they should be printed and distributed to all teachers and parents; to visitors who have preschoolers in their families; to new members when they join the church; to church staff, deacons, and others whose work affects the preschool ministry. Some churches print policies on a single sheet of paper. Others develop a handbook describing the preschool ministry of the church and its policies. Some have posted an extra copy of the policies in a strategic location such as the doors to cabinets or supply rooms. Others have conducted a parent meeting during which a meal or snack is served and written policies are distributed and explained. The method of distribution may be varied according to the church as long as all persons affected are made aware that the policies exist in order for the church to provide the best teaching and care for each child.

### ***Exceptions***

Occasionally, an exception to a policy may be requested. When policies are written and adopted, the burden of making that decision is taken from an individual parent or teacher. The answer to the request may be found within the policies. If the person insists on the exception, the process would be for the request to go to the preschool committee/team for a decision. In some cases, the decision may be taken to the church in a business meeting, since the exception would violate adopted church policy.

## **Fantasy Is Not Mixed with Reality.**

For us as preschool teachers, an understanding of preschoolers' mental development helps us communicate clearly the Bible truths they are ready to understand and to avoid words or phrases which they will understand later in life. Everything the child sees and hears at church should be true, so that the child is never confused. We do not want the child to learn anything now that he will have to unlearn later. An educator has written: "Learning builds on learning: children (and adults) gain new knowledge only by building on what they already know." The relationship of fantasy and reality is one of several important principles to consider when teaching spiritual truths to young children.

- **Literal thinking:** Preschoolers are very literal-minded. They accept what they hear at face value. When we say "God is the Good Shepherd and we are His sheep," preschoolers visualize a pasture of sheep and a shepherd standing with them.
- **Concrete vs. Symbolic:** Preschoolers think in concrete terms. They do not yet understand how an object can mean something else. For example, when talking about the Lord's Supper, preschoolers CAN understand that observing the Lord's Supper helps us think about Jesus. However, they are not mentally ready to understand that the bread is a symbol for His body and the juice is a symbol for His blood. To them, juice is *juice* and bread is *bread*.
- **Seeing is Believing:** Sometimes, religious art is confusing to preschoolers. For example, a well-known painting of Jesus' ascension looks like Jesus standing on a cloud. The preschoolers' image is a literal Jesus standing on a cloud in the sky (where is Jesus on a cloudless day or a dark night?). We as preschool teachers strongly desire to provide the kind of learning in the preschool years that becomes a solid foundation for all of life.

## **Principle 5 Influences:**

### ***Choice of Activity Materials***

Teaching materials should accurately depict people and animals. Fruits with smiley faces and pictures of animals wearing clothes are not being illustrated in the way God created them. Likewise, animals or inanimate objects that talk, sing, and dance are not behaving in the way God made them. Nature items should be realistic, and all books, puzzles, and pictures should depict real people and animals in normal (not pretend) situations.

### ***Use of Fantasy Characters***

One teacher displayed a picture of Santa kneeling at Baby Jesus' manger. This is mixing fantasy with Biblical truth. When the child discovers that Santa is pretend, he will likely assume that Baby Jesus is also pretend because the two of them are in the same picture. Characters from Sesame Street or Disney, Veggie-tales, Power Rangers, Pokemon, and so forth, have no place inside the church. Even though adults may see Veggie-tales as teaching Biblical truths, the child sees vegetables with faces and voices, and this is not real. Reverence for the Bible dictates a more serious and real approach to Biblical teaching.

### *Room Decor*

The hallways and rooms in the preschool area should be free of fantasy figures. Wall paintings of cartoon characters do not mix with Bible truths. Fabrics for items such as crib sheets or blankets, teachers' smocks, and window coverings should not depict fantasy figures.



### *Special Events and Celebrations*

The calendar year affords several opportunities to teach Bible truths if we are careful to avoid symbolism and untruths that preschoolers may understand literally.

- **Valentines' Day** tempts some teachers to talk about letting Jesus into our hearts. To a concrete, literal-minded preschooler, this concept is a physical (not spiritual) act. If Jesus is in your heart, what happens when you have a heart attack or a heart transplant? One preschooler gestured with his arms wide apart to show how big he thinks God is. Then, he held two fingers close together to show Jesus' size, explaining that Jesus has to be small enough to live in your heart.
- **Easter** is the most holy and significant of all Christian celebrations. It is also among the most difficult to teach young children. A wise teacher or parent will emphasize joy and happiness in celebrating the fact that Jesus loves us. He/she will avoid associating Jesus with eggs, chicks, bunnies, and other symbols of New Life which the preschooler cannot yet understand.
- **Halloween** is not a Christian observance and the trappings of Halloween (ghosts, jack-o-lanterns, witches) have no place in the preschool room or activities at church. Appropriate observances of the fall season include cutting and cooking a real pumpkin, collecting fall leaves, and learning about animal behavior in fall.
- **Thanksgiving** is a historic celebration and is a wonderful opportunity to help preschoolers learn to be thankful to God. Time at church is so limited, however, that it is better to leave activities such as making Pilgrim costumes to the school programs.
- **Christmas** is such a special season! We all want our preschoolers to love Baby Jesus and the story of the Nativity. Because preschoolers do not separate fantasy from reality, we should avoid traditional Christmas images such as The Little Drummer Boy, Santa, and Rudolph. Instead, we must focus on the events surrounding Jesus' birth and on the joy of making and giving Christmas gifts and cards to family and friends.



### ***Teachers Are Encouraged and Enabled to Grow Spiritually and Mentally.***

An old adage reminds us that "we teach from the overflow." Teachers must continually study the Bible so that they will have an overflow from which to teach. Good quality preschool curriculum materials include an adult-level Bible study of each lesson so teachers may learn and meditate regularly. In addition, teachers need opportunities to learn about the children they teach, the best teaching methods, appropriate materials, and other topics such as good safety or hygiene practices. This learning may occur in ways such as independent study, group conferences, or formal equipping.

### ***Principle 6 Influences:***

#### ***Budget***

Line items to provide for equipping opportunities and materials should be included in the preschool budget every year.

#### ***Calendar***

Time should be set aside for teachers to come together for equipping and planning. Several times during the year are more desirable than one "pep talk" at the beginning of the church year. Regular planning times should be a part of the calendar.

#### ***Rotating and Substitute Teachers***

These teachers should be required to participate in equipping and planning along with all other teachers. Because teachers are so important to the preschoolers, they must be as well prepared as possible. (See "rotating teachers," Principle 1.)

#### ***Worship Services***

Often a kind-hearted teacher will offer to teach during the worship service every Sunday. This practice does not allow that teacher to worship with the church family or to grow through worship experiences such as singing hymns, praying, and listening to sermons. A better plan is to provide volunteers to take turns teaching during the worship services so that preschool teachers may participate with their own families and the church family. For continuity, each week one of the preschool teachers may remain in the room during the worship service, becoming the lead teacher.

## ***Teachers Model Christian Cooperation.***

A Bible truth we often say to preschoolers is "We work together" (1 Corinthians 3:9). Because preschoolers imitate us as they learn, we must model for preschoolers the meaning of the word *together* in that phrase. No teacher considers his or her session more important than others. And, every teacher understands and supports the specific needs of other teachers and ministries.

## **Principle 7 Influences:**

### ***Planning***

Someone said, "A child has a lot of adults, and all the adults have different rules." At church, all teachers can and should have the same "rules" (procedures). To model working together, all preschool teachers should meet together to make plans which are consistent from ministry to ministry and day to day. Teachers who share a room demonstrate cooperation by planning the arrangement of furnishings and the use/storage of resources and supplies.

### ***Policies***

Church-approved policies are understood and followed by all preschool teachers. This consistency is essential for the policies to be effective and for the preschool ministry to function well. (See Principle 4.)

### ***Locked Cabinets***

A lock on a cabinet is a tell-tale sign to parents and children that the teachers in this room are not willing to work together. A better way is for teachers to plan together which materials will be shared by all and place these in a large portion of the storage area. Then, label a small shelf or part of a shelf for each specific ministry. This designated place is where teachers keep materials unique to their ministry (such as take-home curriculum materials). All teachers respect the space designated and do not remove items from that space.

### ***Room Arrangement***

Teachers who share space meet together to plan the arrangement of furnishings and supplies. Review Principles 2 and 3. When these are followed, teachers can be successful in sharing the space assigned to the children they teach.

### ***Outreach Efforts***

Teachers may find many ways to work together to discover and contact prospects, follow-up on guests, and maintain home communication with enrolled preschoolers. For example, a weekday teacher and a Sunday teacher may go to a home together when a child they both teach is ill or needs some other ministry contact. All teachers of a specific age-group may work together to develop and maintain an updated prospect file. Preschool teachers may also partner with teachers in other age groups (children, youth, and adult) so that effective ministry to the entire family is possible.

## ***Preschool Ministry Supports Parents in their Role as the Child's Primary Teacher.***

A few years ago, a popular book was titled *Why God Gave Children Parents*. This book points out that the task of parents is to rear their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The preschool ministry was never intended to take from parents the privilege and responsibility of teaching their children. Instead, the preschool ministry finds many ways to support and encourage parents in their God-given role.

## ***Principle 8 Influences:***

### ***Education and Encouragement of New Parents***

Today's parents are eager to learn all they can in order to be the best parents possible. Preschool teachers have the opportunity of helping these parents learn to provide a Christian environment for the spiritual growth and nurture of even the youngest infant. Parent meetings conducted by preschool ministries may encourage new parents to meet each other as well as to learn how to teach their children at home.

### ***Parent Training***

Parents of any age preschooler, from birth through kindergarten, will welcome encouragement and support from their child's teachers. Encouragement may be provided through parent meetings which explore pertinent topics, through newsletters mailed to the homes, or through books and videos placed in the media library. Special events such as an annual banquet or parent-child play day may further provide encouragement to parents seeking help in their role as the child's primary teachers.

### ***Literature for Parents***

A portion of the pupil material in most preschool curriculum materials is for parents of preschoolers. Preschool teachers should be diligent in distributing this to parents, either through home visits, mail, or distribution at church.

### ***Parent Participation***

One or more parents may be enlisted to serve on the preschool committee/team. The parents' presence benefits the committee/team as parents express their points of view. Also, parents gain an understanding of the total preschool ministry through their service. Parents who help develop policies and procedures can encourage all parents to support and follow the policies (see Principle 4).

### ***Budget and Calendar***

Money for parent growth, materials, and activities should be included in the annual budget, and time should be reserved on the annual church calendar. Budget items should include such things as honorarium for a guest speaker or teacher, parent materials, and meals or snacks served during equipping events. Special items such as Bibles and dedication certificates given to newborns may also be included.

## ***Everyone Related to the Preschool Ministry Follows the Same Policies and Procedures.***

Consistency is vital to teachers, preschoolers, and parents. This consistency occurs **ONLY** when everything related to the preschool ministry is governed by the policies and procedures adopted by the church. To state the principle negatively, no one is exempt from the accepted policies and procedures.



### **Principle 9 Influences:**

#### ***Parent Requests***

Occasionally, a parent may make a request which is inconsistent with the adopted policies and procedures. When this happens, the teacher may say something like: "Let's look at the policy which relates to your request. Since this is a church-adopted policy, I do not have the authority to change it." Then, the teacher may continue by helping the parent discover a satisfactory resolution to the request.

#### ***Child Care During Non-Ministry Activities***

Some churches provide child care during adult activities or special events such as revivals, teacher workshops, or weddings. When this occurs, the teachers (whether volunteer or employed) are expected to know and follow the policies and procedures adopted for all ministries which involve preschoolers. Safety and security policies should be followed by teachers providing child care, just as by those serving in other preschool ministries.

#### ***Church Staff Requests***

Church staff members have the opportunity to be role models, demonstrating for the church family that all persons know and cooperate with the same policies and procedures. For example, one church has adopted the policy that child care is not provided on Saturday night so that the rooms cleaned for Sunday morning would not be disturbed. In this church, staff members encourage parents involved in a Sunday School class or music activity on Saturday to provide child care in their own homes. Another church, concerned for the well-being of the preschoolers, established the policy that preschoolers must be called for before 9:30 p.m. All church staff members accept the responsibility of seeing that their activities conclude in time for this policy to be followed.

#### ***Volunteer and Employed Teachers***

Simply stated, everyone who teaches preschoolers should be informed of the church-adopted policies and procedures and expected to follow them. The person's status of "volunteer" or "employee" has no bearing on his or her compliance.

## ***The Preschool Ministry Is a Recognized Part of the Total Church Ministry.***

When the nine previous principles are embraced, the preschool ministry will naturally and logically be considered a part of the total church ministry rather than a "step child" in the budget allocations or "forgotten" when new space is planned or the annual calendar is developed. In all considerations, the preschool ministry takes its place alongside all other ministries.

### **Principle 10 Influences:**

#### ***Recruitment of Leaders***

Preschoolers deserve and need teachers who are dedicated to their care and teaching. The church nominating committee, the ministerial staff, and all committee teams consider potential preschool teachers with the same diligence as any other leader. Preschool teachers should be elected by the church, and their service should be recognized just as others are elected and recognized.

#### ***Assignment of Space***

Preschool ministries need adequate, appropriate space just as other ministries. The total church facility should be surveyed (a "space walk" is helpful) and rooms assigned to preschool departments as well as to other age groups. Occasionally, moving one or more class or department to another room is best for the preschoolers AND for the other involved class. Space for every age group and ministry is of equal importance; the preschool should not be deprived of adequate space nor given space which is better suited to another age group.

#### ***Calendar and Budget Planning***

The person or committee/team representing preschool ministries should follow Principle 7, modeling Christian cooperation as budgets are planned and calendars are developed. Preschool ministries should not demand or expect preferential treatment in these matters. However, preschool ministries should insist on fair and appropriate representation in the total church program. The church calendar and budget incorporates the needs of all ministries, including preschool.

#### ***Participation in Church-Wide Activities and Emphases***

Preschool teachers are not expected to spend every moment at church in a preschool room. Spiritual growth and warm, church-family fellowship are essential. Therefore, preschool teachers should be faithful participants in revivals, church suppers, special offerings, and other activities involving the church family. For example, a preschool Sunday School teacher in my church sings in the senior adult choir and attends a Friday morning ladies' Bible study class, gaining fellowship and adult-level Bible study. Teachers avoid isolation and "burn-out" when they participate in the activities of the church in addition to serving as a preschool teacher.

#### ***Staff Leadership and Support***

The Pastor, Minister of Music, Youth Minister, Church Secretary, and Custodian, as well as any other staff members in your church, give their leadership and support to the preschool ministry. They recognize the importance of laying spiritual foundations for faith in the lives of the preschoolers as well as the essential nature of ministry to their parents and families.

# You Can Have a **Principle-based** Preschool Ministry

Before the consultation, secure two large sheets of paper. Print one question at the top of each sheet:

- What is working well in your Preschool division?
- What is not working in your Preschool division?

Post the papers on two different walls. Tape a felt-tipped marker beside each paper.

## **Consultation Agenda**

1. Greet each participant. Facilitate persons meeting one another and knowing one another's relationship to the preschool division. Suggest that the purpose of the meeting is to consider the preschool ministry of the church.
2. Ask participants to locate two large sheets of paper taped on walls in the room. Invite them to write whatever comes to their minds as they consider the two questions. They may use the markers to write their ideas on the paper. Do not analyze the entries on the papers.
3. When participants have returned to their places, give each one the hand-out "You Can Have a Principle-based Preschool Ministry" to use for taking notes.
4. Introduce the idea of a principle-based ministry, defining each principle. Give one or more examples of decisions which may be based on each principle.
5. Suggest that you now want the group to look at their answers to the two questions in light of the principles presented. Ask questions such as:
  - Is something "not working" because it is inconsistent with a principle?
  - Is something "working" but in need of modification to bring it in line with a principle?
  - What entries do you see that should be continued?
  - What do you see that should be discontinued or changed in some way?
6. Lead the group to decide on the logical next steps. Perhaps they need to recruit a preschool committee/team; adopt a set of policies; re-arrange space, budget items, or calendar; or take other actions. Encourage them to recognize that this meeting will be worthwhile only if it produces positive results for the preschoolers, their teachers, their families, and the entire church family. Help them understand that this meeting is the starting point, and that many other meetings and actions will likely follow.

*NOTE: If you are a guest consultant or conference leader in the church, perhaps steps #5 and #6 may be more effectively led by the Pastor, Minister of Education, Preschool Division Director, or other church member. If so, pre-arrange this person's involvement so that he or she can be prepared to take the lead role at this point.*
7. Close the meeting with the story of the rancher (Something to Think About...) and the challenge to do all they can to lead their preschoolers to grow as Jesus grew: "In wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

## **Something to Think About ...**

Principle-based Preschool Ministry leads the entire church family to recognize the wisdom of an old rancher: Year after year, the same sheep rancher won "best of show" at the state fair. His sheep were consistently the healthiest and best-groomed of all the sheep being shown. When a reporter asked him the secret of his success, his answer was "I take good care of my little lambs." A wise church staff leads the church family, including preschool teachers and parents, to take good care of the "little lambs" of the church family. As they grow, they will develop mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially, just as Jesus grew "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

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