

Adjusting The Ministry to Reflect Society's Changes

We Can't Do Ministry Like We Used To Do It!

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As society and the world changes, those of us in children's ministry have to ask ourselves, "Should we change the way we do things?"



In this photograph, at least four men are struggling to maneuver the hard drive onto a truck. The 1956 IBM Model could hold 5 MB of storage which is about 6 images worth.

World War 1 - The solution was hiring women to do what was considered men's jobs, like carrying ice. This was the era before the modern fridges, and the only way to keep food cool and fresh was placing big blocks of ice in "ice boxes."



In the early days of "Sunday School," it was believed that children learned best when they sat still and listened to the lesson told via a lecture.

In the mid 50's to the late 60's teachers presented the Gospel story using flannel boards. The technique was enjoyed by children who were challenged to imagine the stories that were being told through felt figures.





Puppets were used to interest children in Bible lessons during the same time period that flannel boards were used. Puppet shows are still interesting to children today, but the “target age” for puppet shows has grown much younger. Older children may still be interested in puppet shows if the puppets are operated with high levels of drama and humor.

The power of drama was introduced to CM in the mid 70’s. The formation of a mixed age, large group of children was known as “children’s church.” Children loved the skits and the actors became “stars” in the children’s eyes.



Large group shows became popular in the late 90’s and early 2000’s. The challenge to produce a stimulating show that excited the children was significant. Large group gatherings didn’t naturally foster personal relationships between the children and the CM team members.

Large group / small group combination settings were launched in the early 2000’s. The children enjoyed a large group show and then met in small groups for more personal encounters with the CM team members and other children. In these large groups, children of different ages and learning styles were often mixed together. This may have not been the best learning environment for the children.



With the surprising arrival of the COVID 19 pandemic, “church” has changed. CM leaders all over the world are seeking God for what this means for today’s and tomorrow’s church. It has caused everyone to rethink what we do and how we do it!

Navigating The “Maze” of Society’s Changes

The world is always changing. Life doesn’t stay “the same” for very long. People’s interests change; things become popular and then become “dated.” Sometimes, “old” things come back to become “new” again.

We in children’s ministry (CM), can become frustrated if we try to chase the popularity trend. We can find ourselves changing programs or approaches so much that we actually dilute the ministry’s effectiveness and exhaust our team members.

Are there consistent approaches or principles that will always “work” in CM regardless of how society changes? Can we create a CM that remains effective and fruitful over many years? What do we do now that the COVID pandemic has changed so much of what we knew as “normal”?

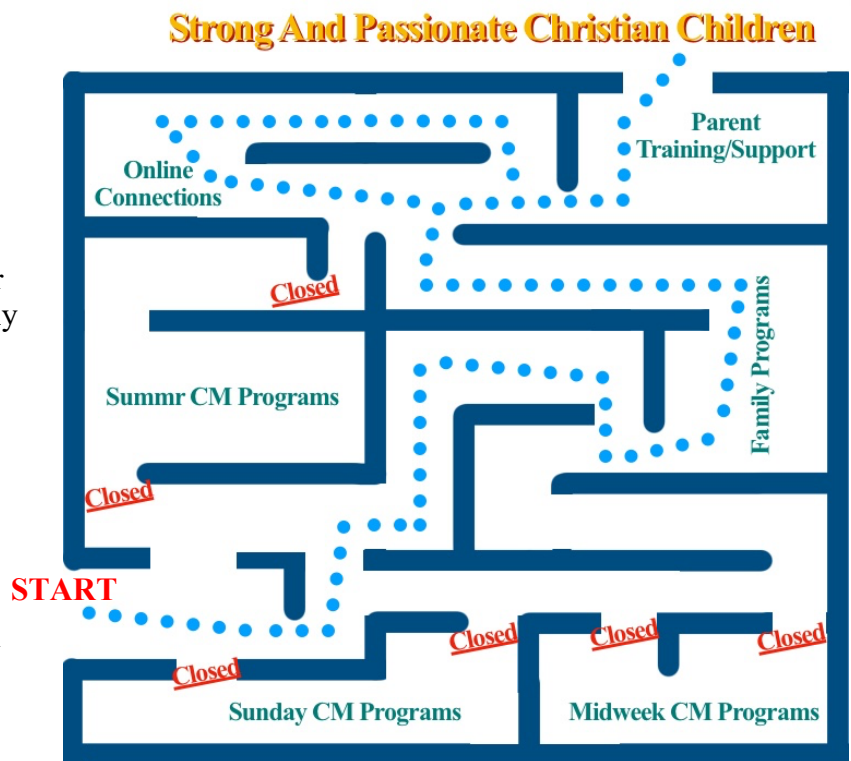
If we view the CM as a “maze” that includes society pressures, popular trends, and now the results of the COVID pandemic, we might be able to see a clear path to our goal of discipling children for the Lord.



The Technique of “Pivoting”

If changes in society restrict the “normal” things you do in CM, keep your eyes on the goal of doing all you can to produce “Strong And Passionate Christian Children,” and “pivot” your efforts to things you can do! When you can’t meet for a program, offer all that you would do for the children online for their parents. When you can’t personally lead children to the Lord or disciple them, pour into their parents through online training, family programs and practical ideas and support.

The “pathway” to the goal of CM may be more complex than it has ever been, but maybe this is God’s way of opening our eyes to what could be done to fulfill His primary plan for the discipleship of His children that He clearly stated in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 –



“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These words I am commanding you today are to be upon your hearts. And you shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as reminders on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.”

God