

# Creating A Memorable Guest Experience

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If you have ever been to Disneyland or Disney World, you know the feeling of being welcome. Once you enter the “Magic Kingdom,” you sense wonder, care, professionalism, and safety. You are sad when it is time to leave, and you can’t wait to return! Your children’s ministry (CM) can produce the same feelings inside those who visit with their children.



The experts at Disney have devoted hundreds of hours of research in order to create the “Magic Kingdom.” We need to understand what children and parents enjoy and do all we can to satisfy that in our programs, curriculum, facilities, and most importantly in our CM team members!

Walt Disney knew that to make a theme park “magic,” it had to include a commitment to service and happiness within the employees (cast members) and in everything that is done or built. Here are some great quotes and principles from Walt Disney that can easily be applied to what we do in children’s ministry:

The Walt Disney Company declares that their values; innovation, quality, community, storytelling, optimism and decency, are present in everything they do.

*“To all who come to this happy place - welcome? Disneyland is your land. Here age relives fond memories of the past and here youth may savor the challenge and promise of the future. Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams, and the hard facts that have created America ...with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world. Thank you.”*



“Walt’s fundamentals for success still ring true. You build the best product you can. You give people effective training to support the delivery of exceptional service. You learn from your experiences. And you celebrate success. You never stop growing. You never stop believing.” Be Our Guest by The Disney Institute

“The happy surprise that a well-served customer feels is the result of hard work on the part of the organization and its employees.” Be Our Guest by The Disney Institute

“Quality service means exceeding your guests’ expectations by paying attention to every detail of the delivery of your products and services.” Be Our Guest by The Disney Institute



“Superlative face-to-face service is just one element in work of exceeding guest expectations. It means paying close attention to every aspect of the guest experience. It means analyzing the experience from the guest’s perspective, understanding the needs and wants of the guest, and committing every element of the business – from the design of each element of the infrastructure to the interaction between guest and cast – to the creation of an exceptional experience.” Be Our Guest by The Disney Institute

“The context within which we seek to exceed expectations is happiness. At Disney, we try to create happiness for people of all ages, everywhere.” Be Our Guest by The Disney Institute

“In Disney theme parks, “everything speaks” means that every detail – from the doorknobs to the dining rooms – sends a message to guests.” Be Our Guest by The Disney Institute

““You can dream, create, design, and build the most wonderful place in the world...but it requires people to make the dream a reality.” Be Our Guest by The Disney Institute



Obviously, we don’t have the financial ability to do all that Disney does in creating a “Magic Kingdom,” but we can do what we can! Remember, God “owns the cattle on a thousand hills” and He can give us amazing ability to create a beautiful “world” inside the CM! It starts with understanding what the parents want, and then training our CM team members to joyfully provide those things!

## What Today's Parents Want

1. **Safety** – They want to see visible indications of how we protect their children!

**Service Points:** Posters that highlight the CM team member screening process, a Parent Handbook that gives a brief overview of our CM safety policies, CM team ID badges, CM check-in process, CM security personnel.

2. **CM Directory** – They want to know where to take their children, without any confusion.

**Service Points:** A graphically attractive directory board, signs that direct them to the check-in kiosks, a printed directory map, CM team members assisting with directions.

3. **Feeling Welcome** – They want to feel “connected” to the CM, its team members, and process.

**Service Points:** CM greeters at the entrances to the CM area (or outside of the area) who smile and greet the families, and who walk with the families to the kiosk area and to class. Every CM team member is kind, courteous and polite. Parents are never talked “down to”!



4. **Feeling Included** – They want to know that their role in their child's life is valued.

**Service Points:** CM team members make connections with the parents at the doorway, CM team member cards with name and church contact information, CM lesson summary and family activity ideas given at check-out, complimenting them regarding their child.

5. **Parenting Support** – They want help in dealing with the complex challenges of today's world.

**Service Points:** Parenting seminars on various topics, parenting pamphlets on various topics, CM social media network and support.

6. **Their Child's Satisfaction And Enjoyment** – They want to see their child enjoying and valuing their experiences at church.

**Service Points:** Offer the best child-focused attention and environments possible, make personal connections to each child, work hard at using the child's name throughout the service.



## What Today's Children Want

1. **Fun** – “Having fun” is still the most important thing to children. We need to create fun experiences that are also meaningful and spiritually focused!

**Service Points:** Personally greet every child, not just their parents! Let children enjoy fun, interactive options during the service. Play and laugh with the children! Don't be so focused on accomplishing the lesson that you neglect the children or make the lesson dry and boring!

2. **Silliness** – Children enjoy when we “play” with their sense of being silly. Adults are too serious! Children like to have fun with absurd, bizarre ideas or actions.

**Service Points:** Recruiting and training faithful adults who are also silly and childlike. Playing with the serious lessons by asking silly questions about things or acting out the lessons in silly ways.



3. **Imagination** – Children learn through imagination. Their minds enjoy “going where no lesson has gone before.” They love to let their minds imagine environments or settings that aren't visually present.

**Service Points:** Using imaginative questions or prompts during the lessons. Stirring the children's minds by asking questions like, “What was the prodigal son's mom doing?” or “If Jesus came back as a third grader, what would he eat in his lunch?”

4. **Movement** – Children need to move! They find sitting still in chairs painful!

**Service Points:** Building interactive movement into each lesson or service. Involving the children's bodies in the lesson by getting them up and walking around. Letting them demonstrate their understanding of the lesson by acting or moving. Incorporating movement into the worship songs.



5. **Personal Attention** – Children crave personal attention; even those who are “introverts.” They don't enjoy being lost in a crowd or a group. They enjoy when an adult knows who they are!

**Service Points:** Use of eye contact, smiles, and their names before, during and after the service session. CM team members must be ready to greet the children in the parking lot, hallways, and at the ministry doors. CM team members must notice what the children are wearing, how they look, what they say, and what their prayer requests were last week! During the lesson time, the children must feel valued by the CM team members smiles and questions. The children's comments and questions must be valued and complimented.



6. **Goodies** – Children love getting things. They love being given gifts by those who are significant to them.

**Service Points:** This can't be done every session, but as often as possible the children should be given items that help them remember or apply the lesson. These “walk away” items are small and inexpensive gifts that are personally given to them by the CM team members. Children can also be given personal items that are given individually and privately (a Bible, or something related to a prayer request last week).

## Being Sad To Leave

When Disneyland guests finally have to leave the park, it is Disney's hope that they leave with a bit of sadness that their visit is over, but with a strong desire to return soon. It can be the same with the children and parents who visit the CM. A very good sign that you have given the children a great experience is that they don't want to leave when their parents come to check them out at the end of the service. If a parent has to say, “Come on, let's go” to their child, let that be a great compliment to you from the Lord! You have created a joyful place that is filled with fun, safety, and personal satisfaction. It's not as good as going to Disneyland, but the effects of their time with you will last a lifetime!

