

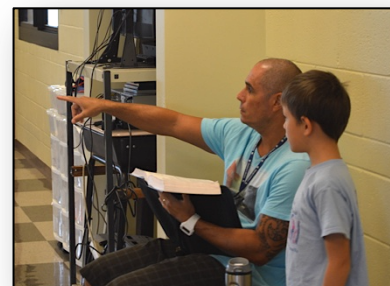
“What’s Best For The Children?”

A simple “filter” to clarify priorities and direction in children’s ministry.

By Steve Alley

Foundation

Leading the children’s ministry (CM) is a complicated challenge. The CM is a “tapestry” of woven priorities, principles, policies, and complicated personalities. Those who lead the CM are often faced with decisions that are filled with conflicts between loyalty to supervisors and the safety or discipleship of the children. One of the easiest ways to “purify” your decisions is to put your options through the “What’s Best For The Children?” filter. After applying that question to your challenge, it is often very clear what must be done.



Process Examples

When faced with a complicated or confusing challenge, ask yourself, “What’s best for the children?” As you “wrestle” with the possible answers, you will most likely settle into a response that is free of emotional or political distractions. Here are some examples of how this question can apply to typical CM challenges:

1. **Politics** – Your senior pastor/supervisor wants you to bypass the personnel screening process to let someone join the CM team. This person is someone who is in the process of being counseled at the church, and the senior pastor/supervisor feels that involvement in a ministry would be good for the person’s recovery. You are faced with compromising your standards in order to please or obey your senior pastor/supervisor’s wishes. When you apply the “What’s best for the children?” question, your response is clear. You cannot put the children’s safety at risk in order to please your supervisor. To say, “No” to the senior pastor/supervisor may “cost you,” but God has placed you in the position of shepherd, and the “cost” is worth it!



2. **Team Development** – A long-time member of your CM team is caustic. He says things that offend other team members, parents, and sometimes even the children. He is a “roaming” worship leader who rotates through the rooms and leads worship for the children. You value his role in the ministry, but he has not made any attempts at improving his behavior, despite repeated warnings from you. You cannot continue to “clean up” after his caustic remarks. You are faced with removing an important person. You have put this off because you don’t want to “hurt him.” When you finally apply the “What’s best for the children?” question, you know what you must do. Removing this person will leave a “hole” in the ministry, but his presence is not “best for the children.”



Scenarios To “Solve”

1. **Promotion** – For many years, you have “promoted” your children in September. The children move up a grade or age level at the first Sunday in September. This is the “way we’ve always done it,” but you are now aware that the children who enter the youth ministry (or ‘middle school’ ministry), have difficulties connecting with the new ministry. There is a significant “drop off” of children who “graduate” into the older group. If you changed the “promotion” to June, to match the school calendar, you can involve the elementary children in the summer youth programs. You are faced with changing a “tradition.” What do you do? What’s best for the children?



2. **Free Play Time** – Several of your children’s classes are led by CM team members who let the children have “free play” at the beginning of the class session. You’ve noticed that these team members are reviewing the lesson while the children play. As the parents drop their children at the door, they react to the appearance of a lack of control in the room. The team members have been serving in the CM for many years. They are good at what they do, but they strongly believe that “free play” is important. You would like to make an adjustment, but you don’t want to “bruise” these “veteran” CM team members. Apply the “What’s best for the children?” question to solve this challenge.



3. **Evangelism** – You feel a clear calling to lead children to the Lord. You want children, at an early age, to make personal connections to the God who can help them make wise choices, and to remain pure in this complicated world. Your administrative supervisor (senior pastor, elder, or boss) believes that children can’t make personal decisions for the Lord until middle school age. He/she has made it very clear that children cannot accept the Lord, nor should they be offered an opportunity to do so. You feel conflicted when parents ask you to help them when their child asks them about how to become a Christian. What do you do? What’s best for the children?



4. **Checkout** – For years, the children’s ministry let the children leave the rooms at the end of the service to “go find their parents.” Now, with the growing emphasis on security and the children’s safety, you have made the decision to keep the in the rooms until the parents come and check them out personally. You’ve encountered significant “push back” from parents and from a couple of the church pastors. You are faced with a decision to “stay the course” and keep the policy in place, or to back down and let the children “free” at the end of the service as before. What do you do? What’s best for the children?

