

The Process of Moving Children Forward In Jesus

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It is the overall goal of every children's ministry (CM) to "move" children closer to Jesus. In every conversation, lesson or encounter, we want to influence the children and "nudge" them closer to Jesus. If we don't focus on that, then we are indeed simply babysitting.

We must always remember that we are not moving children closer to Jesus apart from their parents. Everything we do in the CM must be clearly understood by the parents and we must always make sure to work in partnership with their efforts at home.



Progression Options

In the CM, we have two options for "moving" children closer to Jesus:

1. "Move" children within the existing classes ("mainstream")
 - a. **Pro** – children influence each other, and no need for additional CM team members
 - b. **Con** – difficult to specifically teach or challenge individual children, difficult to monitor or evaluate progress. There is a need specific training for the team.
2. "Move" children outside of the existing classes ("pullout," or into special classes)
 - a. **Pro** – lessons and challenges can be specifically designed, and easy to track and evaluate progress.
 - b. **Con** – children are isolated from other children, children will step away from the regular curriculum and the scope and sequence of Bible learning, and it may create a "caste system" or elevated egos among the children who are in the "special" class.

The Movement Process

The goal is to move children from being "**passive**" viewers of the lesson or worship, to being "**interactive**" participants in their own spiritual development and ultimately to being "**active**" in discipling others on their own spiritual journeys. (Movement from "**passive**" to "**interactive**" and to "**active.**")

This process must be monitored and evaluated based on "milestone moments" in a child's life. The concept of "milestones" comes from the Romans. Milestones were placed on Roman roads to mark 1-mile distances. The milestones also identified the Roman official who was over that specific section of land. As we move children closer to Jesus, we must identify "milestones" to indicate their movement. These "milestones" must be observed and celebrated by both the parents and by the CM team members. The "milestones" could be:



Accepting Jesus.



"Good Choices Award" – memorizing scriptures and making good choices.

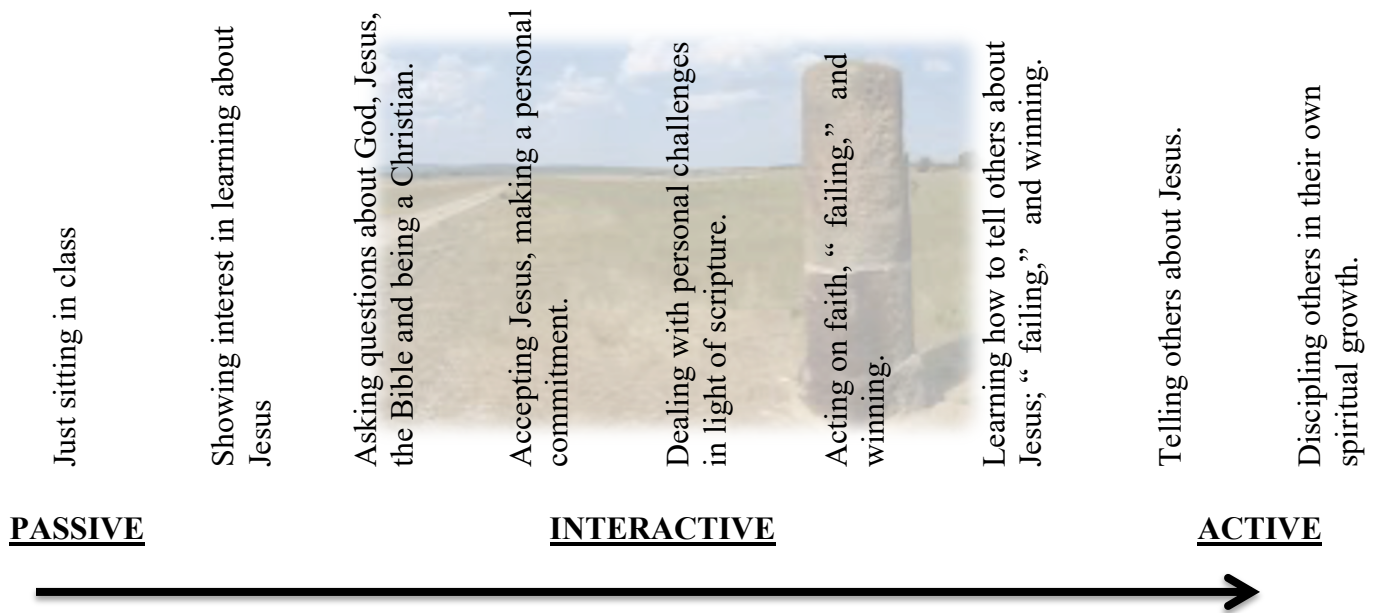


"Fish Pin Award" – memorizing scripture and sharing the Gospel with a specific number of friends.



Leadership in CM or youth ministry events, outreaches or mission trips.

An Overview of The “Movement” Process



Challenges:

As we consider improving the “movement” of children closer to Jesus, we might face significant questions or challenges. Here are just a few that we might need to prayerfully seek God’s will regarding. We must also talk with parents regarding these challenges. We never want to move ahead of God or ahead of the parents in our efforts to influence children!

1. How do we identify “where” the children are in the process?
We need to ask God to show us “milestones” that might indicate where the child is.
2. How do we know who to “move forward”?
We need to ask God to open our eyes to children who might be “stagnant” or be ready to move.
3. How do we know when to “nudge” the child a bit more?
God will show us when it is time. We can also look for indicators from the child. If the child “pushes back” against our efforts, we may need to try it again later.

