

# Children's Ministry Revitalization Plan

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My father-in-law was a furniture refinisher “from the old country.” He was a master craftsman who saw the potential beauty in damaged, distressed wood.

I remember watching him work on a table that I would have considered “beyond hope.” The table had several deep scratches in it, as well as cigarette burns and coffee cup marks. I’ll never forget him saying as he looked at this “mess,” “Oh, look at that beautiful wood.” He then began to strip away the old finish, and sand down to the “bare wood.” I’ll never forget him rubbing his calloused hands over that bare wood with such pleasure! The wood was now ready for staining and more sanding. Then, he finished the process with a beautiful, hard, clear lacquer finish. I now saw what he saw, days before, through all the scratches and dirt.

The process that he put that table through is the same process that God often uses on us, as we seek to revitalize our ministry “wood.” The process involves stripping, sanding, staining, and finishing.

## **Stripping:** The removal of the old finish and sanding down to the “bare wood.”



A caustic chemical is poured on the wood. The chemical begins to bubble as it eats away the finish. The purpose of the stripping process is to remove the finish to get down to the original wood.

**Ministry Parallel:** A time of personal, spiritual and ministry examination

*“Search me, oh God, and know my heart...see if there is any hurtful way in me...”*

Psalm 139: 23,24

*“...remember the Lord your God, it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth...”*

Deut. 8:18

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.”*

Psalm 127: 1

- Examine your own personal, intimate, relationship with God.
- Purify your thoughts, actions, and intentions.
- Remove any hindrances to spiritual health and growth (grudges, hatred, “secret sins”).
- Remember – your calling, gifts, God’s provision/protection.

## **Sanding:** Smoothing out the raised grain.



Stripping “raises the grain” of the wood. The chemicals swell the grain and the surface of the wood becomes rough. Before the stain is applied, the wood must be sanded smooth.

**Ministry Parallel:** Flattening out the “rough edges” and unifying the team.

*“Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.”*

Proverbs 22:10

*“I appeal to you...that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgement.”*

1Corinthians 1:10

- Ask God to show you who on the team “fits,” and who is divisive.
- Ask God for strength to confront, challenge, and possibly remove those who don’t fit.
- Consider which “old” programs might need to be “refreshed” or ended.
- Highlight the CM vision and its value.
- Do all you can to reinforce team unity and celebrate those who represent it.

## **Staining:** Preparing the wood for the finish coat.



Once the wood surface is stripped of all finish and sanded smooth, it is ready to be stained. The choice of the stain color is affected by the personal preference of the craftsman and how the wood finish will fit with the other furniture pieces.

**Ministry Parallel:** Establishing the unified policies/procedures.

*"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."*

Proverbs 3: 6

*"And He appointed some as pastors, teachers...to build up the Body of Christ."*

Ephesians 4:11,12

- Seek God's vision for the ministry (or purify existing one).
- Encourage, support, empower those currently serving with pure hearts.
- Publicize and advertise the ministry vision.
- Seek God's hand in developing leaders from within the existing team.
- Establish safety policies (screening, and operation).
- Establish ministry procedures (on and off campus).
- Challenge or remove "old wineskins."
- Develop coordinators.
- Establish an on-going recruiting process.
- Establish an on-going training process.

## **Finishing:** Protecting the wood and displaying its finished beauty.



After the wood is stained to the right color and the surface is sanded smooth the final stage in the refinishing process is adding a clear coat of finish. This clear coat protects the surface and brings out the deep colors of the wood.

**Ministry Parallel:** Developing and establishing programs and teams.

*"...the Lord will give you...cities you did not build...and vineyards you did not plant..."*

Deut. 6: 10, 11

*"...and whatever he does, it prospers..."*

Psalm 1:3

*"Go, and make disciples of all the nations..."*

Matthew 28: 19

- Examine current programs, using the ministry vision (fruit vs. tradition).
- Consider the needs (church, community, region, world).
- Build programs that will develop servant's hearts in children (service!).
- Dream big, using the ministry vision.
- Surround yourself with visionaries and march forward!