A PLEA TO ALL PASTORS

FEED MY LAMBS

There are three ways the pastor can minister to the children who come to his church.

1) He can devote ten minutes of the Sunday morning service to speak directly to the children. Here are five pieces of advice:

DON'T use the children's talk to speak to the adults (although they will benefit from it). Speak as if the adults were not there.

DON'T just give a talk or story which encourages the children to be good or to obey their parents.

DO use your talks to evangelize the children who are not saved. They need to understand the three basic truths of the Gospel:

A) They are sinners. (It is vital you see their need for salvation.)

B) Jesus Christ died for them, and was punished for their sin.

C) He will forgive and save them if they trust Him.

DO use some of your talks to help saved children to grow. But make it clear that you are speaking specifically to them.

DO make your talks interesting and attractive. If you want help, contact Child Evangelism Fellowship and request the two books of children's talks which I have written.

2) He can ensure that a Sunday School is established and organised, and that the teachers are well trained. CEF workers would be willing to give training in how to teach effectively, how to evangelize wisely and how to feed systematically.

3) He can explore the possibility of week-day organisations with a spiritual emphasis—to be held in the church.

YOUR LAMBS NEED A SAVIOUR AND SHEPHERD

IS IT POSSIBLE? IS IT PRACTICAL? IS IT PROFITABLE?

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THE LAMBS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH NEED TO BE FISHED AND FED

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1) Through Good News Clubs held in the homes of church members on a weekly, week-day, basis to which the children from surrounding homes are invited. These would be taught by church members, but CEF would be willing to provide a programme, teaching materials and training.

2) Through 5-day clubs conducted during the summer in the open-air by young people from the church. CEF would be willing to train and help these young people. This ministry would not only evangelize the children "outside"; it would also be a great spiritual help and blessing for the young people of the church.

3) A Holiday Bible Club could be held in the church buildings every morning, for a week, during the summer holidays and children from the surrounding area could be invited to come. CEF would again be willing to help and advise.

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1) TO EVANGELIZE THE CHILDREN

2) TO HELP THEM GROW SPIRITUALLY

3) TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO ATTEND YOUR CHURCH.
INTRODUCTION

This booklet is addressed specifically to pastors, ministers of the Gospel and Christian leaders, and its aim is to help and encourage you in one part of the wonderful ministry to which God has called you.

FISH AND FEED

The key question for every pastor must always be:- “How can I minister most effectively to the people in my church and to the people who live in the surrounding area?” When the Lord Jesus called Peter into a pastoral ministry He gave him two commands:- “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4 v19). “Feed My lambs...feed My sheep” (John 21 vs15-17).

Peter, the pastor and Christian leader, was called TO FISH and TO FEED. His first responsibility was to “fish” for souls by preaching the Gospel to them; his second responsibility was to “feed” with the Word of God those who had responded to the Gospel. He was called to be A FISHERMAN and A SHEPHERD. He was to serve the Lord Jesus BY HOOK and BY CROOK!! You and I should follow his example in our ministry and devote much of our time to fishing and feeding the people inside and outside our church buildings. But the purpose of this booklet is to draw your prayerful attention to one section of those people who are often neglected spiritually and, as a result, are not fished and fed like the other sections.

WHO ARE THEY? THEY ARE THE CHILDREN!
THE LORD JESUS SAID FEED MY LAMBS

The Lord Jesus gave Peter three very clear and understandable commands after His resurrection.

1) The second of these commands was to “FEED (TEND) MY SHEEP” (John 21v16). The Greek word translated “feed” in this verse means to “care for, govern and guide” and the “sheep” you are tending really need that care!

2) His third command was also to “FEED MY SHEEP” (John 21v17) but the word “feed” used here means” to give food to”. And your “sheep” need to be fed!

3) The first command also uses the word “to give food to” but the command, this time, is to “FEED MY LAMBS” (John 21v15). The Greek word used here is ARNION and it means “little lambs”. And the little lambs, who are so weak and helpless, desperately need food. Shepherds never neglect their lambs.

What is the difference between sheep and little lambs? The lambs are younger and the sheep are older. Is it not reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the Lord Jesus is commanding Peter, and all those involved in Christian ministry, to feed and look after the children? (And surely it is no coincidence that one third of the world’s population are, according to age, “lambs”).

He even gives them first place in His commands, because they cannot find pasture by themselves, they cannot fend for themselves, and they depend on others for everything.

EVERY PASTOR NEEDS TO ASK HIMSELF THE QUESTION “AM I FEEDING MY LAMBS – OR MAKING SURE THEY ARE FED?”
THE LAMBS ARE IMPORTANT

1) The future is in their hands. If we lose them we lose the future. That was why Moses and the Israelites were commanded to teach and feed the children (Deut 4 v9,6v7). The future in the Promised Land depended upon them. A church with a well-organised ministry to children is a church with a future. The children cannot contribute much to the church now but they will.

2) They are open to the Gospel and good biblical teaching. They are hungry for the truth. Childhood is the time when life’s foundations are laid. The Psalmist points this out in Psalm 78 verses 6-8 when he emphasises that if we don’t teach the children they will grow up to be a “stubborn and rebellious generation”, Surely it makes sense to teach those who are most ready for, and most open to receive, our teaching.

3) They can be saved. The Lord Jesus spoke clearly of “...little ones who believe in Me” (Matthew 18 v6) and in verse 3 of the same chapter He also indicated that children are more open to the Gospel than adults. If adults must become like children before they can be converted, then those who are already children have an advantage. And, as a result, statistics show that childhood is the most fruitful field for evangelism.

4) They need to be saved. Children are born spiritually dead and lost. They are outside God’s Kingdom, and can only enter it by putting their trust in Jesus Christ (Matthew 18 vs 11-14). They need to be “fished”. They need to hear the Gospel. They also need the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit in their daily lives.

THE LAMBS NEED YOU AND YOUR MINISTRY
YOU SHOULD MINISTER TO TWO GROUPS OF LAMBS

1) The smaller group of lambs are the children who attend your church because their parents do. They are part of the church’s congregation and the pastor has a responsibility to feed them – even though their parents also have that responsibility.

2) The much larger group are the children who live in the area surrounding the church and who have no connection to it. The pastor and the church have also a responsibility to them based upon the commands of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 28 vs19,20 and Mark 16 v15. The world, and its children (who are included in the “all”), starts just outside the church walls.

Two ministries then need to be developed – one directed to the “church children” and one aimed at the “unchurched” children.

But it needs to be recognised and clearly understood that each of these ministries must have two parts: - FISHING and FEEDING.

1) The lambs need to be fed according to the command of the Lord Jesus. But they cannot be fed unless they are alive! That’s why the primary ministry to children should always be EVANGELISM (FISHING), so that the lambs can, first of all, trust Jesus Christ as their SAVIOUR, and receive SPIRITUAL LIFE.

2) This ministry should be followed by EDIFICATION – when the saved children are systematically FED from the Word of God – so they can experience SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

THE FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF CHILDREN WITH TWO DIFFERENT NEEDS IS THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE MADE IN A MINISTRY TO CHILDREN.
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