

KIDZMATTER CONFERENCE 2026

HELPING CHILDREN

LOVE THE LOCAL CHURCH

HELP A CHILD LOVE THE

PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH



JOHN 13:34–35 NET

34 “I give you a new commandment—to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **35** Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another.”

THE CHURCH IS THE PEOPLE

- ▶ At it's core, the church is not a **building, programs, or events**
 - ▶ It's the **called out people** of God
- ▶ These other things **matter**, but they do **not matter most**
 - ▶ Connecting a child to **godly people** in the church, then, is **most essential**

THE BENEFIT TO A CHILD

- ▶ Research shows that a **child thrives spiritually** with **multiple caring adults** beyond parents/guardians
 - ▶ The Fuller Youth Institute identifies **5 caring adults** as ideal

PRACTICAL TIPS

- ▶ Build in time for **relationship building** in Sunday school/small groups
- ▶ Attend **games, events**, etc. as much as possible
- ▶ Be **guides** and **fellow travelers** on the journey of faith, not **generals** remaining in the rear
- ▶ Be **appropriately vulnerable** (i.e., real) with your kids
- ▶ Remember that **relationships/real life** always trumps a lesson

HELP A CHILD LOVE THE

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH



EPHESIANS 4:15-16 NET

15 But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head. **16** From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body builds itself up in love.

KNOW AND AFFIRM THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

- ▶ The church exists to **glorify God**
 - ▶ **Microscope** v. **telescope**
- ▶ The church exists **not solely for itself**
 - ▶ Although, that is a **component**
- ▶ The church exists also for the **community**
 - ▶ To show the goodness of the gospel and **bring others into** its folds

AFFIRM EACH BELIEVING CHILD'S ROLE IN THAT PURPOSE

- ▶ A believing child is **not the future** of the church
 - ▶ He or she is the **present** church
 - ▶ There is **no "junior"** church
- ▶ A believing child has the same **gifts, calling, responsibilities**, and **privileges**
 - ▶ Experienced in **age-appropriate** ways

PRACTICAL TIPS

- ▶ Set the **right bar** (i.e., expectations and opportunities) for kids
 - ▶ Not too **high**; not too **low**
- ▶ As leaders, **respect** kids
- ▶ **Involve kids** in ministry
- ▶ **Pray** for, **talk** about, and **engage** in the community
- ▶ Celebrate **wins** in fulfilling the church's purpose

HELP A CHILD LOVE THE

PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH



COLOSSIANS 3:16–17 NET

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHINGS

- ▶ In many ways, teachings are the **substance** of the church
 - ▶ They are to guide what we **believe**
 - ▶ They are to guide what we **love**
 - ▶ They are to guide what we **do**
- ▶ The church is **more** than its teachings, but **never less**

PRACTICAL TIPS

- ▶ As leaders, emphasize the **three aspects** of doctrine:
 - ▶ **orthodoxy** (right belief); **orthopathy** (right feeling); and **orthopraxy** (right action)
- ▶ As leaders, emphasize the **three categories** of doctrine:
 - ▶ **first tier** (essential teachings to Christianity); **second tier** (essential teachings to your denomination/church); **third tier** (non-essential teachings)

PRACTICAL TIPS

- ▶ As leaders, strive to **instill wonder and awe** in precepts
- ▶ As leaders, strive to **show the why** behind precepts
- ▶ Always **welcome questions and doubts**

PRACTICAL TIPS

- ▶ Consider major thematic emphases
 - ▶ Nursery: God is **love**
 - ▶ Preschool: God is **good**
 - ▶ Younger Kids: God is **forgiving**
 - ▶ Older Kids: God is **glorious**



HELP A CHILD LOVE THE

PRACTICES OF THE CHURCH

ACTS 2:46–47 NET

⁴⁶ Every day they continued to gather together by common consent in the temple courts, breaking bread from house to house, sharing their food with glad and humble hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the good will of all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number every day those who were being saved.

EVERY LOCAL CHURCH HAS ITS PRACTICES

- ▶ Some are **shared**
 - ▶ e.g., singing, prayer, preaching, ministry, missions
- ▶ Some are **unique**
 - ▶ e.g., liturgy

PRACTICAL TIPS

- ▶ In kids ministry, **fun is fine** but **meaningfulness is mandatory**
 - ▶ There should be a **compelling “why”** behind all we do
- ▶ Focus on instilling a child's love in the **shared practices** of the church more than the unique practices of your local church
 - ▶ It's more important to connect a child to **the** church than **your** church

TIPS FOR WHAT PARENTS

SHOULD NOT DO



A FEW BROAD TIPS

- ▶ Allow **too much autonomy** in attendance/participation
 - ▶ Force **too much rigidity** in attendance/participation
- ▶ **Defame** the local church
 - ▶ **Lionize** the local church
- ▶ Be **too casual** with commitment to a local church
 - ▶ Be **too rigid** with commitment to a local church

TIPS FOR WHAT PARENTS

SHOULD DO



A FEW BROAD TIPS

- ▶ **Model** a deep, true, healthy love for the church
- ▶ Be **consistent** as a disciple
- ▶ **Prioritize** the local church (with balance in life)
- ▶ Create **traditions** related to the local church
 - ▶ e.g., before/after weekly participation
 - ▶ e.g., annual (such as after Christmas Eve service)