

EQUIPPING

for intergenerational ministry

Encouraging gifts and talents



A body is made up of many parts, and each of them has its own use. That's how it is with us. There are many of us, but we each are part of the body of Christ, as well as part of one another. Romans 12:4-5

Belonging to something bigger is something that God hardwired into each of us. One of the fastest ways to help someone begin to feel like they belong is inviting them to contribute. Children and young people are no different. When a church genuinely creates space for children and young people to find a serving role that uses their gifts and talents, they can truly begin to know they belong.

But how do we do this?

How do we help all people build a connection and sense of belonging through leadership and allow all people to share their gifts and talents?

Perhaps this starts with some new ideas about involving children (and young people) in our congregations. Ivy Beckwith, in her challenge to rethink children's ministry, points out –

‘The key to inviting children to use their gifts and talents in the service of the community is being intentional about identifying them and then asking the children to put those gifts to use for the good of the community. Too often we think of children's ministry as doing something for our children. We need to expand our thinking to see that it is also working with our children and allowing them to minister to the adults. But we need to take the time to

think creatively about what it is our children can contribute and then find ways to make that contribution meaningful for them and for the other generations of the community.

Some examples might be...

Allowing children to serve the church with their gifts and talents cements them to the faith community and gives them a solid base of people who know and love them. This can reap enormous spiritual benefits when the children reach adolescence and young adulthood. These opportunities promote that feeling of belonging to the faith community, which is so important for children's spiritual growth. And adults grow spiritually when they accept gifts from children and allow children to serve them. It is a reminder of what being a person of faith is all about.’

How can we help children & young people recognise their gifts & talents?

- Read a classic Bible hero story like the story of Noah, Joseph, or Esther. Talk about what these great men and women of the Bible possessed as their special talents, and how they used them to do great and mighty things.
- If your family has multiple children, write each child's name on a large piece of paper and tape it to the wall – a piece for each child. Throughout the week, encourage



everyone in the family to write (or draw if they are too little to write) something they admire about that family member, or what they think their unique gifts are. At the end of the week, read the posters aloud at your family devotion time. This is a great way to encourage your family members and let them see just how amazing everyone thinks they are!

- Find an activity that will help your child use his or her talents or even grow them. It could be a volunteer or ministry opportunity like visiting a local nursing home once a month and taking them homemade goodies and cards. It could be playing a sport, or acting in a play. There are so many options when it comes to activities for children. Don't be afraid to let them try a few things (as time and money allow) to find the one that's perfect for them!
- Read a storybook or watch a children's DVD that has an encouraging message.
- Find encouraging verses and print them out placing them on their bedroom wall. Remind them daily that they are loved by God!
- Pray! Pray for all people in your congregation. We will all struggle at times and our prayers can help others move through the seasons of life and onto a more clear and confident path to becoming the amazing person that God wants each of us to be!



As congregations we also want to encourage...

All generations that they have something to offer

- Do you share a vision for welcoming and uniting all generations?

Trust in God's calling and equipping of younger leaders

- How are the different generations catered for in each of your ministry teams?
- Do you regularly pray for people of all generations to share their gifts and talents within the congregation?

Young people to be given opportunities to voice how they would like to see events/ ministry occur

- Where are there opportunities for this to happen in your congregation?
- How are mentors guided to facilitate supporting young people into new roles and positions within the congregation?

The planning of a shared future together

- Where are there opportunities for leaders of all ages to plan to spend time together spiritually?
- How could you develop this further? Philippians 2 or Galatians 5:22-23 might be a great place to start.

God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings.

1 Peter 4:10 (TLB)

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