



Tips For Serving In A Smaller Ministry:

1. Take charge: if a ministry does not exist - and it needs to – you may be the one God is calling to start it.
2. Be aware: take security measures and precautions accordingly to protect each child in your ministry.
3. Effect change slowly: work with the church and not against it; patience is a virtue.
4. Draw on unique church family dynamics: have a farmer tell and demonstrate the parable of the sower/soils. Offer cooking, sewing, woodworking, and outdoor classes for kids. And consider providing opportunities for homeschoolers in your community to get together such as field trips, workshops, movie nights/lock-ins.
5. Teach on location: use unique settings for lessons such as a field, barn, stream, hiking trail, forest, citrus grove, camp, etc. Connect the location to the Scripture.
6. Try not to assume anything: many children in this setting have been raised in the church – they know the language and the Bible trivia. However, some of them that will walk through your doors will not have relationships with Christ. Continue to teach salvation and discipleship. And there is never anything wrong with Bible verse memorization.
7. Incorporate Multi-Generational Ministry: Use retired teachers to help out in the children’s ministry, midweek programs, summer programs. Start a pen pal ministry for children and home-bound individuals.
8. Get creative with the budget (or lack thereof): use free lesson plans, do supply drives, recycle, talk to larger churches about using their curriculum when they are finished, and ask local businesses for donations. Some Bible lessons can be found online/ digitally for free – but read through the entire lesson to make sure it includes your Biblical theology and denominational doctrines; not all free “Bible” lessons found online actually include Scripture – some are only promoting good characteristics.
9. Set a healthy pace: most likely, your church ministry leaders are volunteers and have full-time jobs elsewhere. Establish priorities, find balance, and don’t go this alone!
10. Encourage diversity: through books, media presentations, day trips, child sponsorship relationships, or mission trips, teach your students how to relate to others of varying cultures and backgrounds – the world is now on our doorstep.
11. Make Sundays count: many children and their families are not able to attend midweek programs and activities due to long distance drives, the price of gas, and other obligations. Capitalize on the time they are there with you!
12. Don’t count kids, make kids count: be careful how you may react to low attendance. Instead of investigating who’s not there (and why), celebrate those children who are there! After all, continual absentee inquiries and acknowledgements may only suggest to children that they matter more when they’re absent.

13. Gratitude is contagious: reward volunteers, honor children's workers in church services, affirm volunteers with personal letters, phone calls, and visits. Who knows, one day someone sitting out there in the pew might decide they want to volunteer and not miss any of the fun! If you pat a back, they'll be back!
14. Space-the final frontier: finding space for a ministry to take place can sometimes become a huge obstacle. Unfortunately, most churches are built for adults, with classrooms being planned for table discussions, not active-learning experiences. Few spaces are completely satisfactory, but none are beyond hope. The secret is to let the kids "own" their room/space. Allow them to decorate it, paint it, clean it, stock it. If it's theirs, they'll meet anywhere...including the preacher's office. Now, there's an idea!
15. Work with what you have: doing ministry with limited resources is always a challenge. So begin by asking, "What resources do I have today that I could start with?" You may only have a \$100 budget and 2 volunteers – start there. Start with what you have.
16. Burn-out is not an option: it's commendable that someone in your church is willing to work with children every week, but it's not advisable. It may take a while, but eventually they are going to burn-out. Try to be ahead of the game and protect people who might be giving too much.
17. Try not to apologize: be honest with families who visit your church, and don't apologize because you don't currently may not have much in the way of children's ministry. Reassure them that you truly value their children, and ask them to stay and help you build something.
18. Parental support: think about this – the more you may see how your ministry to children impacts their parents and the more you seek to bring the parents on board and minister to them as well, the bigger your vision will grow and the more the ministry will flourish.
19. Face the Giants-Find contentment in your ministry: Occasionally you may start to feel like Debbie Downer, especially if you've got the First Church of Effective Children's Ministry just down the street, bulging with ideas, money, and kids. But remember: numbers are relative. Success is not in numbers as much as it is in ministry. If changed lives are produced, it won't matter whether its 5 or 50. It's far better to succeed in a few things than ultimately fail in many. Specializing may be the answer for your ministry and programming. Give your program a unique signature: develop a top-rate children's church, a quality after-school program, or a ministry to children from broken homes. So face the giants...and dare to sling the stone!
20. Be prepared to change and grow yourself: helping at any stage in a children's ministry program – beginning, reviving, tweaking, growing – may actually begin to change the way you pray, the way you teach, and the way you parent. Let God be God – allow Him to use the process and the children to change you in ways that you may never expect and may never surrender to. God has you in His grip, follow His lead!