

# Down for the Count: The "Baby-Sitting" Mentality of Preschool Ministry

*By Bryan Braley*

An amazing thing is happening in churches all across the nation. Children's ministry emphasis is turning from child care to actual ministry. This trend truly reflects the heartfelt desire to follow our Savior's command to make a way for the children to come to Him and not to hinder them. But as the Spirit of the Lord moves in great and mighty ways in elementary children's worship services throughout the land, our preschool ministries are still fighting to overcome the stigma of being a glorified baby-sitting service. I believe it is time that we, as children's ministers, stand our ground and take action to make sure the "baby-sitting" mentality of preschool ministry goes and stays down for the count!

As a veteran children's minister with almost twenty years of experience, I have always felt that the really important ministry takes place in the upper elementary age levels -- the third through sixth graders. I have always enjoyed holding services for all children, however my focus was on older children. In the past, these have been my favorite groups in which to minister. Then came the day that God introduced me to His view of preschool ministry. Guess what I discovered, *God cares about preschoolers and he wants them to receive effective, quality ministry.*

**I may be slow but God is patient** - It took God a while to get it through my head, but He has shown me that preschoolers really can worship Him. They can benefit from the message of God's Word, grasp its spiritual concepts and apply it to their lives.

**It all begins with leadership** - As with everything else in the church and in life, change begins with leadership. As God opened a door for me to see the importance of preschool ministry, He began to change my heart, mind, and attitude. As a result of this change, my wife and I have been able to totally do away with the "baby-sitting" mentality of preschool ministry. Once we changed our thinking, we were also able to change our methods of ministry. We began to duplicate this attitude and approach in those who worked with us. Our volunteers saw the difference this new philosophy of preschool ministry made in our kids, and the parents saw it, too.

**Change comes slowly** - Although there are many in our church that still view the preschool department as a glorified baby-sitting service, most are those who have no contact with our ministry. Once they come into contact with what God is doing in The Flame Factory (the name of our program), they quickly realize that we are making an eternal difference in the lives of these children.

I have always had a heart for children, but I overlooked the importance of those precious souls that still held so much of the innocence. I am beginning to learn why praise is perfected in the mouths of infants and toddlers and why we must become as little children to enter His kingdom.

**What are you going to do about it?** - No longer should we overlook such fertile soil and continue to treat our preschool department as a babysitting service. God desires effective, quality ministry to these precious young boys and girls. As leaders we should ask God to help us re-evaluate our preschool ministry philosophy. Lay your preschool program on the altar and ask God, "Is this the most effective way for us to reach the little ones You have entrusted to us?" Allow God to work on your mind, heart, and attitude to reflect His desire and His purpose.

**In short, we must do whatever it takes to put the "baby-sitting" mentality of preschool ministry down for the count! Let's move beyond baby-sitting to real ministry in our preschool departments.**