

FAMILY TOOLBOX



SERIES

**HELPING YOUR
CHILD MAKE
AND KEEP
FRIENDS**



Children's Ministry

Golden Hills Community Church

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A Note to Families

The Children's Ministry of Golden Hills Community Church exists to *“Glorify God by helping families develop age-appropriate disciples who impact their world for Christ”*.

In order to accomplish this task, we at GHCC have attempted to describe the discipleship of a believer, which includes these three elements:

- **Worship**
- **Grow**
- **Serve**

We believe that children, as followers of Christ, can also participate in the discipleship process. We have further identified twelve specific spiritual growth issues within these three elements of discipleship.

It is our desire in Children's Ministry, to create a balanced program, which addresses all of these spiritual growth issues, helping to produce a healthy, age-appropriate disciple.

However, statistics tell us that the national average for children attending Sunday school is 26 hours each year (that's only half of the time). And our church is no exception to this. Our average Sunday attendance is roughly half of our total registration. What does this mean? Well, we could have the best programming, the best teachers and staff (which, by the way, I think we do) and we would still have a very hard time in accomplishing the goal God has set before us. But there is a way.

The way in which we can realize the goal of making age-appropriate disciples is stated in our purpose: "...by helping *families* develop age-appropriate disciples..." In fact, the best approach to aiding your child's faith development is *not* in the formal setting of the church, but in the informal, everyday life of your home. God's Word clearly reminds us of this in Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. The commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress (teach) them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down at night and when you get up."

We encourage you to take advantage of every opportunity to "impress upon your children" spiritual truth. Use dinner conversation, driving in the car, bedtime routines and getting ready each morning as times to reflect and teach about God and his faithfulness.

To help you in these discussions, we have developed a series of tools for you to use. These tools are series of booklets (**THE FAMILY TOOLBOX SERIES**), each addressing the spiritual growth issues. In them you will find information, discussion questions and activity suggestions to help you guide your children on their spiritual journeys.

Dear Parents,

Friendships are important to our kids. It is also important for us to understand the development our children experience in learning how to make friends and how we as parents can support, model and encourage their choice of friends.

First, we'll look at the three-stage sequence in the development of friendships. Then we'll explore some items to teach and model to our kids regarding friendships.

Our prayer is that you will be able to help your child develop lasting friendships that will encourage them in their faith and walk with the Lord. God bless you.

Pastor Mark

Helping your Child Make and Keep Friends

Three-Stage Sequence in the development of Friendships

Level 1. *Friendship as a handy playmate* (about 5-7 years old). Friendship is concrete and activity based. Friendship is affirmed by the sharing of material goods. There is no liking or disliking of personality traits. Because friendship is merely a pleasurable play association and material exchange, young children begin as easily as saying “Hi”, and terminate as easily as refusing to share or hitting.

Level 2. *Friendship as mutual trust and assistance* (about 8-10 years old). Friendship is a consensual relationship in which both parties respond to each others needs and desires. Friendship can be affirmed by gift giving and other material offers. However, it goes beyond these exchanges to include help-giving and other acts of kindness. At this level, each person can be counted on to support and not harm or take advantage of the other. Level 2 respondents recognize that friendship involves psychological and not just concrete elements, and they like or dislike others based on personality dispositions.

Level 3. *Friendship as intimacy and mutual understanding* (11 years old and up). Friends are now regarded as people who understand and accept one another as individuals and who share their innermost feelings and thoughts. It is now a stable relationship. Since each party knows the other well, friendships are regarded as important in alleviating psychological problems such as loneliness, sadness and fear.

As friendships move from level 1 to 3, all the earlier expectations are maintained, but new ones are added. Reference to the intimacy and faithfulness of friends is more common among girls than boys. Children have a tendency to make friends with people who are like themselves in observable characteristics.

Friendship is a concept that grows with maturity. Be realistic in what is taught children on friendship at each age level. Instruction can encourage children to move to a higher level of friendship, but it takes time for children to move to a higher level. Here are some items we can teach and model to our kids about friendships:

Lasting friendships are built on shared interest. Playing on a sports team or serving on a project together gives opportunity to talk, laugh and work with others. Having a Christian friend is based on the on the best shared interest of all-Jesus! Supporting our children in pursuing their interests helps them to build relationships with people who may become lifelong friends.

People don't have to be just like us to be our friends. Friends may disagree and still be friends. We learn from people who are different from us.

Friends who help us to be the good persons we want to be are very special gifts from God. Good friends help us to make the choices God wants us to make. We should be this kind of friend to others as well.

Sometimes we may find that people we thought were good friends actually are not. Betrayal is painful. And we all encounter it because people are not perfect. Children need help in understanding that sometimes friendships end and in believing that others will last.

Our friendships help children learn what it means to be a friend. When we make and keep commitments to friends, we teach the value of doing so. If a friend is ill, we can bring our kids along when we visit. When a friend has a birthday, we can include our kids when shopping for a gift. We demonstrate that maintaining friendships takes effort but that making the effort is worth it.

We include friends in our prayers. When friends are present to share a meal, give thanks to God for their friendship. When children express concern for their friends, we can stop to pray, asking God to comfort and to guide. We can also pray that God will send friends to our kids that will need and want good friends like them.

Welcoming our children's friends into our lives can be an important way to share our faith and values. Inviting our kids' friends into our homes and occasionally including them in family outings are opportunities to demonstrate our values and faith.

The Spiritual Growth Issues:

Worship

- Salvation
- Worship

Grow

- Bible knowledge/Application
- Bible Memory
- Stewardship
- Healthy Relationships
- Using Gifts, Talents and Skills
- Church Commitment

Serve

- Outreach
- Missions Involvement
- Christian Service