



children everywhere  
walking with Jesus

**CHALLENGE**  
*for small groups*

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# Session Workbook

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Seven sessions that challenge us to explore  
our own context, stretch our thinking and  
discover new possibilities,  
so that in our community, we will see  
**children everywhere walking with Jesus**

# Stop and think



## CHILDREN

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seeing them through God's eyes

**STOP:** Every child is uniquely made in God's image and loved by Him. We need to know and value them as He does if we are to help them walk with Jesus.

**THINK:** How well do I know the children around me, understand their world and allow their voices to be heard and acted upon?



## EVERYWHERE

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entering their world

**STOP:** Broken environments lack the safety and nurture that children need. The Good Shepherd longs for children to walk among green pastures and quiet waters where they can thrive.

**THINK:** Are we creating environments of safety and nurture where children can thrive even in challenging circumstances?



## WALKING

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growing on the journey

**STOP:** Learning to walk with Jesus can happen anywhere, at any time, with anyone – or alone. Both formal and informal learning experiences are vital to developing deep roots in God that will enable children to stand strong.

**THINK:** As I explore life and faith with children, do I demonstrate creativity, relevance and a confidence that God speaks to them through the Bible and prayer and life experiences?



## WITH

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thriving through relationships

**STOP:** God seeks a relationship with every child. As we walk along with them, we support them and help them to make sense of life and faith.

**THINK:** Do I see my relationships with children as opening possibilities for them to have life-changing experiences with God?



## JESUS

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bringing Jesus to others

**STOP:** As children walk with Jesus, they bring Him and His message of hope into their world. They can share Him in places and ways that adults can't.

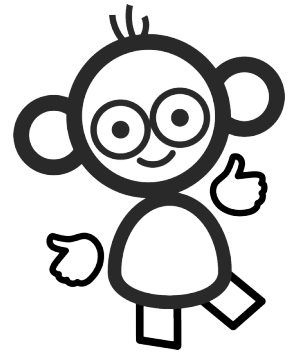
**THINK:** Am I overlooking the contribution children can make to the Great Commission?



# Introduction

The Bible gives us a very positive picture of children walking with God and the outcomes of this:

- Daniel and his friends received enough early teaching in their home and community to withstand the influences of a foreign, pagan culture and change it for the better.
- Timothy's mother and grandmother introduced him to God from infancy, a heritage that was praised by Paul as foundational to the leader he became.
- Young Samuel ministered with an aged Eli in the temple, across the generations, learning to be sensitive to God's voice and eventually lead the nation.



All of these were blessed to be surrounded by ordinary people who loved God and passed this relationship on to them and supported them in their early walk with God. This is what we would love to see happen with the children in our context! So...

*What does it take to help children everywhere walk with Jesus?*

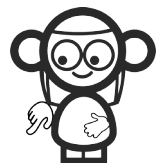
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*As members of a local church body – pastors, church members, children's workers, school teachers, grandparents, parents, youth and children – what can we do to help children become growing, active disciples of Jesus for a lifetime?*

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In recent years, the Global Children's Forum, comprised of people from all over the world, has been asking these questions. We've looked at examples from the Bible and our own experiences and explored established and emerging theories and practices. We have sought to find some common, simple things any individual, family or church can do to come alongside children and help them to walk with Jesus.

By joining the 'Children Everywhere Challenge', you are joining with people and churches all over the world who are committing time and energy to observe, ask questions and explore new ways to connect with, disciple and incorporate children into the Body of Christ and its mission. We serve a loving God who is deeply familiar with our local context and its unique challenges and realities. He knows and loves every child in our community. He longs for each one to thrive in a relationship with Himself. If we are humble and are willing to listen and obey Him, we believe He will guide us and empower us to be His hands and feet in reaching out to the children around us.



The Children Everywhere resources have been created by people working with children all around the world. Please feel free to use and share them as you would like but they may not be sold for profit. The files for this program and the others in the Toolbox can be downloaded from [www.childreneverywhere.com](http://www.childreneverywhere.com) (where you can also download and print extra copies of this document).



## **CHILDREN EVERYWHERE WALKING WITH JESUS**

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See information on inside front cover.

## **REFLECTION**

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What got me thinking in this session?

## CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

We often think we know all about the children around us. But there is always more to learn if we are willing to take some time to really listen to them. Before our next session, talk to at least three children about the following questions:

- What are the best things about being a child?
- What don't you like about being a child? (What makes it hard to be a child?)
- What do you think it will be like when you grow up?
- If you could change one BIG thing in your community – or in the world – what would that be?
- What do you think that God is like? What do you think that He would like to say to us?

Some things to keep in mind:

- The most important thing is that the children we are listening to feel free and welcome to tell us what they think. This is not always easy as children will often try to guess what we want them to say, rather than honestly share their opinions. Make it clear that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Usually children will talk more if they are not the only ones being 'interviewed' but be aware that some children will submit quickly to the opinions of the group rather than feel free to express their own thoughts.
- Follow good child protection processes: for example, do not interview children alone or behind closed doors; ask permission of the parents.

Take notes during the conversation if possible. After each interview, make note of answers that were surprising or new to you and answers that reaffirmed what you already knew.

### NOTES FROM THE LISTENING EXERCISE

# Session 2: Children



## WHAT WE VALUE

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Children are wonderfully complex. The Bible portrays children everywhere as:

- Precious gifts made after the image of God... AND... Beings separated from God by human sinfulness (Genesis 1:27; Psalms 127:3; Psalms 51:5; Proverbs 22:15; Romans 3:9-10).
- Learners in need of guidance and grace... AND... used by God to teach others (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Psalms 78:4, 6-8; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:14,15; 1 Samuel 3:10, 17:45-47; 2 Kings 5:2, 3; Matthew 11:25, 21:14-16).
- Valued by God, and part of His plan... AND... vulnerable, and need of protection (Matthew 18:10; 19:13-16; Luke 18: 15-17; Exodus 22:22-24; Zechariah 7:9-10; Matthew 18:5-6; James 1:27).

As we live with them and see them in our world, we discover children everywhere are growing in ability, exploring their identity and discovering how they fit into and relate to their world; largely dependent on others and therefore easily exploited, abused and neglected; deeply sensitive and moulded by the good and bad in their environment; bringers of joy into today's desperate situations; and bearers of hope for the possibilities of tomorrow.

Children are people, wondrous in all their complexity, vulnerability, brilliance, ignorance, creativity and brokenness. God welcomes such people into his family. God calls on us, too, to welcome children: to see them, to see them as people, to listen to them, learn their names, love them and share life with them. To introduce them to Jesus and help them as they learn to walk with Him.

# CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Observations of how children grow.

## AGE CHARACTERISTICS

Regardless of the culture, children go through some similar stages in their development. However, definition of stages of development is only a general indicator of “normal” or “average” and is therefore limited. This guide can get you started considering the important variations among age groups.

	MENTAL	PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	SPIRITUAL
<b>Very young children</b> (2-4 years old)	They don't know how to read. They can only remember short phrases. They need us to use simple words. They have a short attention span. They are curious and love to learn new things.	They love to touch, feel, move. They get tired easily. They cannot play most kids' games well yet. They are growing rapidly.	They do not understand winning/losing. They play best side-by-side. They may not be good at sharing. Parents are the most important people in their lives.	They can understand basic truth about God's love for them. They can understand the difference between right and wrong. They can recognize their need for forgiveness and respond to Christ as Saviour.
<b>Young school-age children</b> (5-8 years old)	They are learning to read. Some may not be good at it yet. They have lots of questions. They are eager to learn.	They are learning to play typical childhood games. They love to be active.	They enjoy friends. They are still tender about winning and losing. They are growing to enjoy group play more.	They are more ready to understand a personal decision for Christ. They begin recognizing the truth and authority of the Bible.
<b>Older school-age children</b> (9-12 years old)	They have great memories. They are ready to think relationally about different subjects. They ask difficult questions.	Some are awkward, growing quickly as adolescence approaches. They love physical activity. They love food.	They are competitive. Friends are important. Big differences between boys and girls, socially. Everyone is concerned about fairness.	They may need assurance of their personal decision to follow Christ. They can begin praying on their own, reading the Bible on their own. They want heroes, like JESUS!



## LESSON IDEAS

## REFLECTION

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What do I want to put into practice this week?

# CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

## OPTION 1: RESEARCH

If something that came up in either the listening exercise or the discussions in this session raised an interest in your mind, spend some time finding out more about it. You can do this by doing some more listening to children and talking to people who might know more about it such as teachers, medical personnel, children's workers, etc. You can also search the internet for information. One website which might be helpful is the following: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc/>. Write up what you find so that you can share it in a minute or two.

## OPTION 2: RELATIONSHIP

Getting to know and understand children will take us to where they are and where they spend their time. Where are some of the places children are found in your area or community? Pick a place where you could go to meet with some of them and get to know them, what they are doing and why they are doing what they are doing there.

## OPTION 3: PHOTOGRAPHY

Take pictures of the environments in which we find children. Look for examples of both safe and unsafe situations. Bring your photos to the next session so that you can share them – on a phone or computer would work well.

## NOTES

# Session 3: Everywhere



## THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

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Thoughts about safe and unsafe environments

## CREATING AN OASIS

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What does the Bible say is our responsibility for children and their environment?

- Hebrews 11:23
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Psalm 82:3
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Matthew 18:10

What is an oasis?

What would an oasis look like in our context?

## **REFLECTION**

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What is one thing I want to put into practice this next week?

## CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

What is one important step we could take before the next session that would make our family or church an 'oasis' for our own children and the children of our community?

### PLANS

### REFLECTIONS

# Session 4: Walking



## LEARNING IS A CONTINUOUS JOURNEY

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What lessons did you learn from the game?

## DIFFERENT WAYS TO LEARN

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What ways of learning do you see in this passage?

- Deuteronomy 6:6–9

What are some other situations that you could make use of to enhance learning opportunities?

## REFLECTION

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What encouraged you in this session?

What challenged you in this session?

## CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

### OBSERVING LEARNING

Observe how children are learning in your homes and church activities. This might include formal education such as school and Sunday school lessons, or it may be informal learning such as listening to songs or helping at home or seeing how other people act. Watch closely! Children are learning all the time – that is their job!

How did you see children learning?

Are we doing a good job of making sure that what we are doing is effective and life-forming?

What could we do to improve it?

# Session 5: With



## **WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE!**

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Why is this true?

## **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

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What do we learn about our relationship with God through the story of the Lost Sheep?

What are some things which help build our relationship with God and what are some things which hinder it?

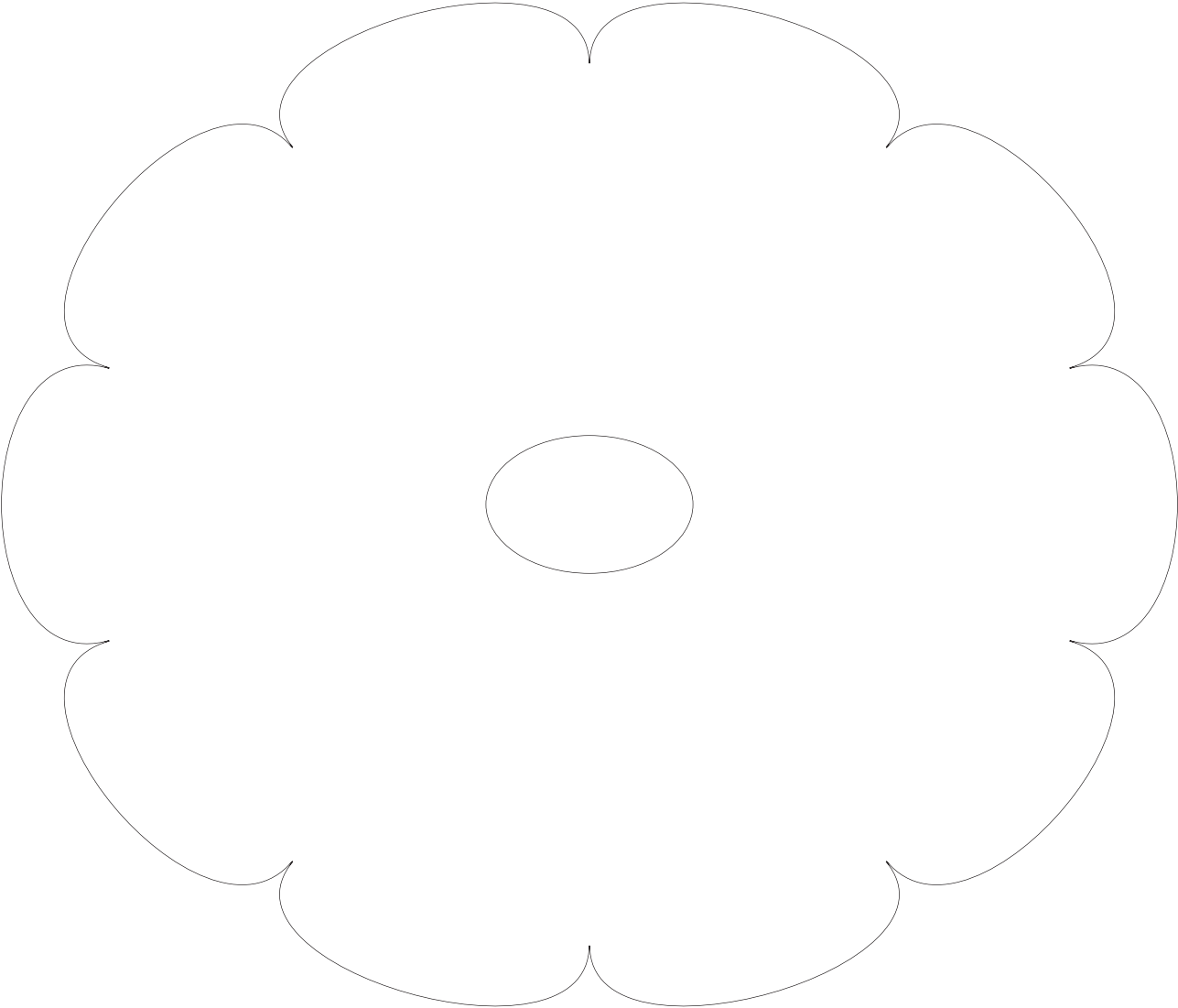
What do these things look like for a child? What unique obstacles might they face? How can we help them?



# RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

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Mind Map of my relationships



What can we learn from the relationships between the people in these passages?

- Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12:1-13:1, 16:1-6)
- Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19)
- Timothy and mother and grandmother
- Hannah and Samuel (1 Samuel 1:21-28)
- Lazarus and his sisters (John 11:1-43, Luke 10:38-41)
- Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:8-18)
- Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis 27:40, Jacob and Esau)
- Moses, his sister and mother (Exodus 6:1-10)

## **THOUGHTS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS IN OUR FAMILY AND CHURCH**

### **REFLECTION**

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What is one new thought I had in this session?

# CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

## **OPTION 1: RESOURCES**

Research some resources which are available to help children read the Bible and spend time with God.

## **OPTION 2: INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Come up with some ideas to enhance the intergenerational relationships in your church. Talk with leaders, parents and children.

## **OPTION 3: RELATIONSHIP WITH A CHILD**

Choose a child or two with whom you have regular contact but don't know very well. Look for ways to talk with them and get to know them and their families better. (Be sure to follow good child protection processes: for example, do not spend time with children alone or behind closed doors, ask permission of the parents.)

## **NOTES**

# Session 6: Jesus



## **BECOMING LIKE JESUS**

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How do we represent God to those in our community?

## **GOD CAN WORK THROUGH CHILDREN**

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Thoughts from Matthew 21:6-16

Who are the people whom God can use?

- 1 Corinthians 1:27
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- James 2:5
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Acts 4:13
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Psalm 8:2-4

## **WE NEED TO ENABLE CHILDREN TO SERVE**

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What do you think are the 2-3 most important things for us to be doing for children to free them and equip them to serve God in our families and churches?

Describe how children are serving or not in our own families and churches.

What would it take to make things better?

## **REFLECTION**

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What is one thing that impacted you during this session? What will you do as a result?

## CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Ask a group of children how they would like to participate in God's mission. Create a list of possibilities with them and help them to choose something they will do. Support the children as they work out their plan. If possible, take some pictures to show this group!

### PLANS

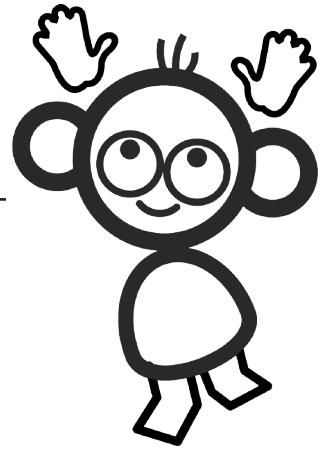
### REPORT

What was your project?

What were the results?

Did anything surprise you?

# Session 7: Next Steps



## **WORKING TOGETHER**

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What do you think are the main reasons that God calls us to work together?

- 1 Corinthians 12:12-26
- Ecclesiastes 4:12
- John 17:20-23
- Ephesians 4:4-6
- Psalm 133

Who are involved in the lives of our children?

How could we work together to accomplish more?



## **REVIEW AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

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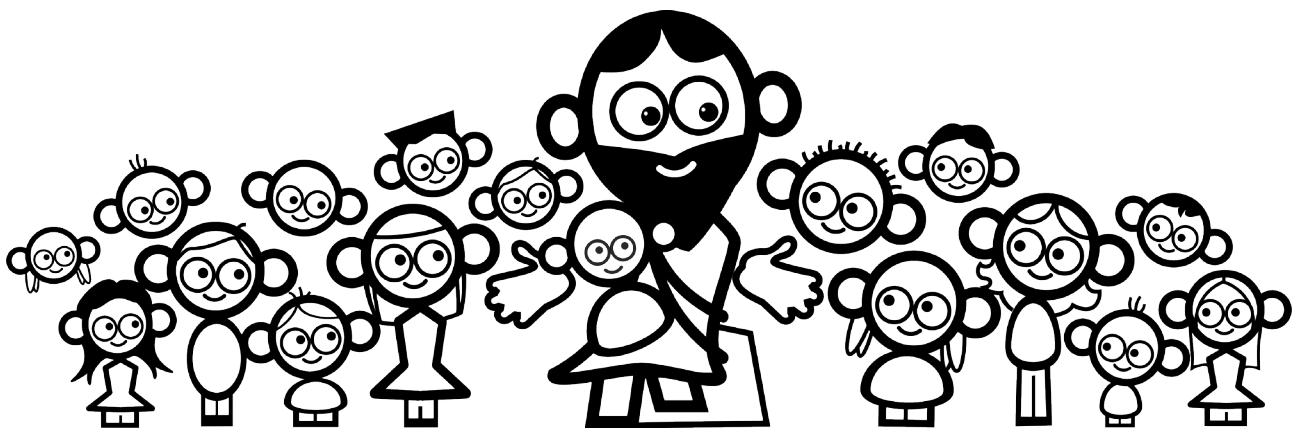
What things have stood out to you as we have gone through the sessions?

What would you like to pursue further?

How is God leading this group?

# Notes

# Notes



**Let the children come to me**



**children**

seeing them through God's eyes



**everywhere**

entering their world



**walking**

growing on the journey



**with**

thriving through relationships



**Jesus**

bringing Jesus to others

