

The Children's Church

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It was a typical Sunday morning. I was greeting members of our church family as they were leaving the worship service. On any given Sunday, as I spoke with departing worshippers, it was not unusual for someone to express their appreciation of the children's sermon I had shared moments before. However, it was one specific comment offered that day which would stay with me long after the parking lot emptied and echoes of the closing hymn grew dim in my memory. A soft-spoken matriarch of the church, with a preschool grandchild at her side, shook my hand firmly and stated, "I really appreciated the children's message this morning." It wasn't the words or the lady offering them per se that caused her statement to resonate, but rather the intentionality and sincerity with which she offered her uncharacteristic remark.

As I reflected on her comment, I questioned what unique aspect or quality of that day's object lesson with a dozen or more preschool and elementary children had captured her interest. Separately, I asked several of my own children to describe what they had learned from it. With uncanny accuracy, they related the major point I was trying to convey during those few precious moments in which I had captured the undivided attention of the children. I came to realize that I had not only drawn the children gathered around me into the lesson I was sharing in that brief span of time, but also a doting grandmother and perhaps other adults in the congregation that day. It stands to reason that the matriarch was not drawn to the scholarly content of the children's sermon I offered, but rather to its simplicity.

Reflecting upon Christian acquaintances of my parents' and grandparents' generations, I recall individuals whose knowledge of Scripture and maturity of faith would rival that of many I have encountered in twenty years of ministry. While recent generations have often been referred to as "biblical illiterates", divulging a deterioration of individual and corporate knowledge of God's Word, it seems logical that a similar decline in maturity of faith should present itself in today's Christian community. Is such the reality of the modern-day church? Are we, as individuals and as the body of Christ, a church of "Baby Christians"? When is the last time you heard someone extolling the message of the Children's Sermon rather than the other sermon? Maybe it's time we look seriously at the intentional simplicity of the Gospel we offer to children in the worship setting and extend it to the adults as well. In consideration of our diminished knowledge of Scripture and maturity of faith, maybe it's time for the Church to become the Children's Church, as we all strive to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).