



Preteen Ministry – smart pages

Gospel Light's Preteen Ministry Smart Pages (The discipline guide for Children's Ministry)

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Noted as 'The essential guide to understanding and ministering to teens' Preteen Ministry is specific to 10-14 year olds. For anyone involved in children and youth ministries the challenge is 'how do I keep the 10-14 year old?'

"Research shows us that early adolescence, that period of life from 10-14 years of age, is the second most important developmental stage in the human life. But experience tells us that kids in this age level are dropping through the cracks in our church ministries. Some have called them 'tweenagers,' but they're not really. It's not that they are between two stages; they are their own identifiable stage of life."

Such statements encourage me as a parent of 11 & 13 year olds and also as someone who works with children in the 8-12 year old bracket.

Having read through 'Preteen Ministry' I picked up lots of helpful and productive ideas that gave me hope and courage to not give up on the task or the kids.

One of the beauties of this book is that each page is perforated enabling reproducible quality. (Each page is quarter size). This means that as a leader you can bring your team together and work through parts of the book as a team. (with the two chapters recommended for use in parent education classes.)

This book is divided into three sections:

- "Firming up your Philosophy: understanding Preteens and Preteen Ministry."
- Implementing Your Vision: Making your Preteen Ministry work."
- "Nuts and Bolts: Issues for Preteen Ministries."

Within each of these sections are several chapters – I will write a brief comment about each chapter providing a comprehensive review of this valuable book.

Section 1: “Firming up your Philosophy: understanding Preteen and Preteen Ministry.”

Throughout this section you will, through professional research and the thoughts of preteens come to understand who preteens really are!

Chapter 1: “Who are these Preteens?”

They are people filled with uncertainty, whose body is physically, mentally and emotionally going through changes. This uncertainty impacts how we prepare and lead ministry to these emerging adults. It is this age group that needs leaders who are really spiritually mature and focused on preteens.

Chapter 2: “Designing Ministry for the needs of Preteens.”

This is dedicated to the needs and desires of preteens. The authors look at the physical needs of the preteen’s changing body and consequent needs this brings about; needs like, rest and play, security and freedom, loving and feeling loved unconditionally as a way of understanding God’s love.

Chapter 3: “Grouping and Grading – Where do sixth graders belong?”

Presents a history of the Junior High movement based on American data.

Chapter 4: “Bridging the Gap – the transition to Youth Ministry.”

Someone once likened the preteen time to moving from one culture to another. “Often children’s leaders and the ministries they design are so completely different from youth leaders and their programmes that kids have a difficult transition making the leap from the children’s ministry to the youth group. Not only is the early adolescent going through his or her own physical, mental and emotional change, but now we throw a major social change at the preteen too, by moving him or her into a completely different setting at church.” As leaders we assist this transition by working together in preparation and integration.

Chapter 5: “Getting your Ministry Started – or restarted.”

The focus of this chapter is change and the necessity of change in getting a ministry up and running. The process involves the concerns that people at all levels (children, parents, leaders, officer) of the church may have about what is to come.

Chapter 6: “Recruiting, Motivating and Managing Your Staff.”

The key motivation for someone to volunteer/work with preteens is being called by God to do so. The authors go on to list qualities of a successful Preteen Leader:

- Be loving
- Light hearted and joyful
- Calm and secure
- Patient
- Kind
- A worthy role model for kids
- Faithful
- Understanding and compassionate
- Mature and most importantly, the preteen leader must show evidence of spiritual growth in their own lives.

SECTION 2: “Making your preteen ministry work.”

Section two is the practical section of the book, filled with tried and tested ideas for your preteen ministry. A Big Picture – A Model for Preteen Ministry - is presented. *“A model that is ready to be implemented in your church. Then we’ll provide numerous tips and great ideas for how to make your church’s preteen ministry a place that preteens will call home, where they feel loved and included. The rest of this section is jam-packed with specific, tried-and-true activities recommended by successful leaders from around the country, including fun things to do, service projects and ways to get kids involved in ministry inside and outside of your church.” p.8*

Throughout this section there are strong ‘overtones’ of Americanism. Through media many of our children are well entrenched in the American way of life. The following chapter headings give a strong indication of the contents.

Chapter 7 “The Big picture – A model for preteen ministry.”

Chapter 8 “Creating a group Identity – A place to belong.”

Chapter 9 “Creating small group Intimacy – A place to be known.”

Chapter 10 “Games, special events and more!”

Chapter 11 “Helping preteens serve the church family.”

Chapter 12 “Challenging preteens to minister outside the church.”

SECTION 3: “Nuts and Bolts; Issues for preteen ministry.”

This sections offers lots of fantastic information gained from countless folk who work with preteens. Subjects covered include discipline, nurturing the whole family, curriculum tips and mentoring; all with the aim of making a life changing and lasting impact on the preteen.

Chapter 13: “Discipline and the preteen.”

The author's comment "more volunteers quit teaching kids at church due to their frustration and feelings of inadequacy brought on by student discipline problems than any other issue." P.119. This chapter revisits some of the complexities of the adolescent's emotional roller coaster before delving into some leader's responses.

- Prevent discipline problems by filling your student's emotional tank.
- Prevent discipline problems by making your boundaries clear.
- Prevent discipline problems by loving kids unconditionally.
- Prevent discipline problems by building positive relationships.
- Prevent discipline problems by programming for the needs of the preteen.

It finishes by summing up with some quick tips for correcting problem behaviours after the fact and getting the preteen to take responsibility for their behaviours and choices.

Chapter 14: "Reaching out to the whole family."

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 becomes the foundation of this chapter. Focus is given to the part the family has to play in the life of the preteen. "There's no debating it. God plans for healthy, mature, GOD-fearing parents to raise their kids to love and know God through their consistent, daily exhortations and demonstrations of the truth of God's Word." p132. Much of Chapter 14 and 16 are written in a manner that can be used in preteen parent education classes.

Chapter 15: "Getting the most out of your curriculum."

Next to discipline, curriculum would have to be the next big issue for preteen ministry. Choose a curriculum and resources that will work for you and your teachers. In choosing the curriculum ask yourself the following questions:

Does the curriculum meet the:

- Physical needs of preteens?
- Emotional needs of preteens?
- Social needs of preteens?
- Intellectual needs of preteens?
- Spiritual needs of preteens?

Focus is then given to the eight ways people learn through learning styles. There are activities and tips for connecting with the different learning styles the chapter concludes with an extensive curriculum evaluation guide.

Chapter 16: "Leading the preteen to Christ."

Henrietta Mears writes "many a child has learned first to love his teacher, and then his teacher's God." P153. This chapter is short, sharp and to the point. Over and above all else, respect the child and the decision they make.

Chapter 17: "Ready to understand forms."

Much of what we have is in our LAPS child safe programme. In addition are some valuable assessment forms: Teacher, Parent, Helping teachers and families connect, and a preteen questionnaire.

Remember, the church's goal is to support parents in nurturing spiritual growth in their own children. We need to provide the environment for that to happen.

This book can be purchased from good Christian bookshops.

Other editions available:

Smart pages for Children's Ministries Grade 1-6

Nursery Smart Pages