



Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus

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Doing Children's Ministry Differently

"Popular approaches to children's ministry equate good children's ministry with glitzy, fun programs that parents and congregations appreciate for giving them respite from children's presence. In contrast, Csinos and Beckwith define children's ministry as serving and caring for children, leading them in turn to serve one another and the world as Jesus' followers. This insightful book will help congregations – not just 'children's ministers' – explore what Jesus meant by teaching us to welcome and be led by children."

–Diana R. Garland, dean of the Baylor University School of Social Work and coeditor of *Journal of Family and Community Ministries*

In *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus* children's ministers David M. Csinos and Ivy Beckwith draw on research in human development and spiritual formation to show how children can become disciples and churches can become centers of lifelong discipleship. They write:

Children's ministry at its best isn't really about programs. It's about ministry. . . . Children's ministry isn't merely providing cognitive input about that one moral or theological point each story or lesson was meant to teach. It's not about helping children fall in love with the "dreamy Jesus" portrayed in their Sunday school workbooks. It's about helping them live as committed disciples of the radical way of life Jesus calls us to. . . .

When we use the term children's ministry (or ministry with children), we refer to all those ministerial practices and activities that are done with children. As you'll discover in these pages to come, ministry with children happens when adults of all ages form friendships with young people, when we work to ensure that all children – regardless of age, ability, culture, race, gender, class and family life – receive radical hospitality, when we worship as a congregation with young people as active and meaningful participants, when we engage in theological (and even non-theological) conversations with children, when we take their questions seriously, and when we link arms with young disciples to work for justice and care in the world.

Key points:

- Children's ministry is not about programming; it's about formation.
- Children's ministry in the way of Jesus takes children seriously.
- Children's ministry has the power to shape the way church is often done.
- In churches exploring new kinds of Christian faith, children's ministry can't continue using models and theological assumptions that the wider community has moved beyond or unlearned. Children need to be part of these forward-thinking faith communities.

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