

Ministry to children changes moms' & dads' lives, too

July 20, 2007
Posted: 7/20/07

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By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

Children's pastors across the country continue to reach families by first reaching children.

Parents—Christian and non-Christian alike—want what's best for their respective families, children's ministry leaders report. Parents want their children to be brought up correctly and loved in a physically, emotionally and spiritually safe environment.

When churches provide that environment, they gain opportunities to minister to parents as well as their children, explained Art Murphy, director of [Arrow Ministries](#), a children's ministry consulting firm.

Adults are looking for services that assist them in raising their children, Murphy noted.

"We have so much opportunity to reach unsaved people because the world is looking for help," he said.

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Jeanette Harvey, minister to children and preteens at [First Baptist Church in Port Neches](#), said she regularly sees families become part of her congregation after the church initially met the needs of a child.

Harvey told about a young girl who attended Sunday school with a friend and learned about the church's upcoming Vacation Bible School. She enjoyed Sunday school and invited her brother to come with her to VBS. The children liked that and invited their mother to church. Now, the entire family is part of the congregation.

Harvey has followed the same principle in her own life, choosing to become a member of a church that first ministered to her children. "When the church reached out to my toddlers, that's the one I wanted to go to," she recalled.

To serve parents, churches must design children's ministries to reach out to them as well, said Diane Lane, [Baptist General Convention of Texas preschool/children's ministry](#) specialist.

The ministries may include parenting classes, keeping parents informed about what is being taught in Bible study and inviting parents to participate

in children's activities.

"The children are a gate to the family, but use that also to educate the parents," she said.

A comprehensive children's ministry that also reaches adults requires leaders to design the effort to achieve that purpose. "It's not babysitting," said Deborah Upton, associate pastor for children at [First Baptist Church in Richmod, Va.](#) "It's a ministry where we are partnering with parents in the spiritual development of their children. We want to offer something that is quality and meets that need."

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