

Dear Faithful Leader,

The Genesis Children's Ministry team has prayerfully developed and agreed upon a set of guidelines to assist Small Group Leaders in addressing expected behavior during Sunday School. As leaders, we want to make the most of the limited weekly time we have to guide children in their faith by offering children the best possible experience, by engaging the children, and by creating a safe and loving environment. These guidelines will enable the Genesis Children's Ministry to offer a consistent set of rules and expected behavior for all children, and enhance your experience as a Small Group Leader.

When Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me," he didn't mean just the calm or well-behaved ones. Reaching out to all children, regardless of behavior, models Christ's unconditional love and acceptance. Please keep in mind that when a child misbehaves or is disruptive, it is usually because he/she is seeking attention. These suggestions should guide you in addressing behavior and promoting a positive experience for children and adults.

- **Set rules and behavioral expectations for the whole class.** Make the rules as clear as possible and ask children to show self-control and personal responsibility by following the rules. Your goal should be to avoid negative behaviors and attitudes that can be contagious.
- **Notice and praise positive behavior.** Praise children specifically and authentically. Encourage them to recognize their own positive behavior.
- **Provide attention outside of class.** Sending cards, visiting children's homes, listening, letting children vent and cry, and praying with them are excellent ways to give all children positive attention and express your love for them.
- **Keep your activities interactive and engaging.** Give children opportunities for active games as well as conversational/reflective time. When you discover what kind of activities works the best for your children, you may let the Director of Children's Ministries so you can have them prepared ahead of time.
- **Recruit children as helpers.** Assigning children specific tasks not only provides positive attention but also corrals their energy.
- **Address any violation of your class rules in a positive and firm way.** You may start with two warnings. If the misbehavior doesn't stop, and you need to address the child a third time, the incident should be reported to the child's parents immediately at the end of the lesson. Have the child be present during this conversation and give the child opportunity to explain him or herself to you and his/her parents. If the incident involves another child that got hurt or any property damage, please include in this meeting the Children's Ministries Director or Coordinator.
- **If you need to address parents,** please show empathy to these parents. Ask questions about this behavior being observed in other places. Ask for suggestions from the parents on how to avoid/address this misbehavior in the future.
- **Avoid losing your cool,** raise your voice, and threaten or degrade children. This is a way for children to achieve their goal of gaining attention — albeit negative.
- **For Preschoolers.** When a child starts to disengage, immediately get the group moving, following directions, or making sounds to accompany your activity. You can also give the disengaged child a special job or have a volunteer sit near the child. Positive attention goes a long way in motivating the child to please you.

Final comment, Jesus left the many to go find the one. The 99 were already in the 'classroom,' but Jesus took a chance to go after the one who had run away. If a difficult child was worth his time, then surely he or she is worth ours, too. Please remember there is a whole team holding your back and praying for you. Never hesitate to ask for help.

Thanks for your serving.