

A Guide for **Planning** and **Preparing** for the Coming Children's Ministry Year



Vacation time is well under way and millions of families are traveling. For the vast majority, the destination was chosen ahead of time and specific preparations were made to coincide with the venue and desired activities. Great destinations inspire more excitement and motivation in preparing for what's ahead.

Have you ever thought about children's ministry in a similar manner? Is the comprehensive discipleship of the children and youth viewed as a great, inspiring "destination" – one worthy of our most devoted preparation? Is your church excited for the coming Sunday school year and all the opportunities available for participating in this sacred endeavor?

That is why it's crucial to begin gearing up for fall by heralding a clear, compelling destination or *vision* —one that will inspire and motivate the church, parents, teachers, and volunteers such as,

Our vision is that our children and youth will, by God's sovereign grace, come to know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God.

Has your church been actively pursuing this kind of biblical vision? Is it being heralded from the pulpit? Has it been embraced in the pews, classrooms, and homes? Is it serving to inspire and guide the church and families as you plan and prepare for the coming school year? What are some practical steps for moving forward? We would like to suggest 5 successive steps you can pursue in the coming weeks.

Step 1 – Embrace and Communicate a Compelling Biblical Vision for the Comprehensive Discipleship of the Next Generation.

Practical action for Ministry Leaders

- Take an active, visible role in proclaiming explaining the vision to the whole church body. Lead and feed the flock in this sacred endeavor. Inspire, support, and encourage the church, especially parents and ministry volunteers.
- Develop an overarching vision statement for your church (or you can use Truth78's vision statement above) and distribute it throughout the church body.
- In the coming weeks, commend the four-part video series, [*Foundations for God-Centered Children's Ministry*](#) to ministry leaders, volunteers,

and parents. These 15-minute inspirational videos give an overview of the essentials on which to build a biblically solid discipleship model.

- Email a copy of our “[Developing a Vision Orientation of Ministry to Children & Youth](#)” publication to all parents and any prospective children’s and youth volunteers.
- Consider giving copies of [Zealous: 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generations](#) to ministry leaders and/or volunteers.
- Establish a weekly prayer group for the coming year that highlights specific prayer topics for the discipleship of children and youth in your church. Consider using the [Big, Bold, Biblical Prayers for the Next Generation](#) booklet as a guide.

Practical Action for Parents and/or Ministry Volunteers

- Read the above-listed “Next Steps for Ministry Leaders.” If your pastors/elders are not currently providing clear leadership in this area, humbly and respectfully reach out to them. Ask if they would consider watching the [Foundations for God-Centered Children’s Ministry](#) series as a starting point, or give them a copy of [Zealous: 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generations](#).
- Take advantage of the other resources listed above and share them with others.
- Families: Develop an overarching biblical vision statement for your family this year (or you can use Truth78’s statement above). Print it out and place it in prominent places within your home. Recite it together from time to time, and use it to remind one another of what is most important in life.

Step 2 – Develop Programs for the Comprehensive Discipleship of Children and Youth

In his book, [Zealous: 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generation](#), David Michael lays out seven commitments that provide a framework for the comprehensive discipleship of children and youth and serve to set a course for the year ahead. Consider them as a type of sieve for evaluating your current programs and moving forward with any necessary changes.

- **Embrace a biblical vision for the faith of the next generation.** (Step 1 from above.)
- **Foster a robust partnership between church and home.** How can the church better inspire, equip, and train parents to prioritize the discipleship of their children both in the classroom and at home this year? Read [“Partnering with Parents.”](#)
- **Teach the breadth and the depth of the whole counsel of God.** Do you have a plan in place for doing this over the span of time from infancy onward? What should it encompass? Are current programs structured to aim for this goal? How much time is spent on actual biblical instruction in the classroom and at home? How will this year’s teaching resources serve this goal? Read about Truth78’s [Curricula Scope and Sequence](#) and [curricula distinctives](#).
- **Proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.** The gospel must be firmly grounded within the whole counsel of God, consistently and carefully explaining essential doctrines that are necessary for a proper and thorough understanding of the gospel. Do your programs and resources promote this more comprehensive view of proclaiming the gospel? Read this [short article](#) for a further explanation and additional resources.
- **Disciple the mind, heart, and will.** Do your programs and resources take into account the “whole” child and the necessity for genuine faith and Spirit-empowered transformation? Are your programs structured to maximize spiritual growth, rather than other activities? Is an appropriate amount of time given in the classroom or at home to meaningful discussion and personal application of biblical truth? See this [post](#) to explore this topic further.
- **Pray with dependence on God’s sovereign grace.** As you plan for the coming year, are ministry leaders, volunteers, and parents humbly and earnestly praying through options and seeking God’s will for how to move forward? Has thought been given to how to weave prayer throughout children’s and youth ministries—outside of class and within the classroom? Read about more ways to do this [here](#).
- **Inspire worship of God, for the glory of God.** Our programs should be designed and structured in a way that serves to magnify the greatness and worth of God, who is worthy of our highest devotion, love, honor, and praise. Serious joy in God should be reflected in our homes and classrooms. What practical steps can be taken to develop ministry programs that aim toward this goal? See this [article](#) for additional tips.

Step 3 – Choosing Truth78 Resources: Common Questions and Answers

If you are planning to use Truth78 resources this year, especially if this is your first experience, here are some common questions and answers along with additional helpful links.

I've never used Truth78 curricula. Where do I start?

- [Curriculum Introduction](#)
- [Foundations for a God-Centered Ministry to Children and Youth](#)
- [An Explanation of Our Scope and Sequence](#)

How much time is necessary to teach your Sunday School/Midweek Bible curricula?

Generally speaking, a minimum of 45 minutes is required to teach the curricula. Each lesson has two main “pillars”—the Large Group Lesson (20-30 minutes depending on the age group) and the Small Group Application (10-20 minutes). This time prioritizes biblical instruction and spiritual formation. If additional time is available in the classroom, we have included additional ideas for worship, prayer, Bible memory, meaningful activities, etc.

We have to combine a wide age of children in our Sunday school classes. Which curricula are most easily adaptable?

While there is no easy solution for this all-too-common situation, our resources can be adapted to meet your specific needs. That said, here are three curricula that many churches have found to be most easy to adapt: [The ABCs of God](#), [Faithful to All His Promises](#), and [How Majestic Is Your Name](#). Read "[Adapting Truth78 Curriculum to Your Specific Needs](#)" for additional tips.

Why do you encourage each student to have a corresponding workbook, notebook, or journal with your curricula?

Workbooks, notebooks, and journals are a key component of the curriculum because:

- They enhance the application process. Students are encouraged to move from head knowledge to heart application—responding to the truths they're being taught in each lesson.
- Workbooks for younger children provide opportunities for “hands-on” activities—coloring, pasting, adding stickers, etc. This helps students

focus as the adult leader reviews key lesson themes and leads the discussion time.

- Notebooks and journals for older children provide the students with a variety of opportunities for note taking during the lesson, small group and individual activities, personal application, and further study.
- They ensure that every student receives a summation of the entire curriculum even if they have missed weeks of class.

Workbooks, notebooks, and journals are available in spiral-bound print and/or electronic formats.

How do your curricula resources assist and encourage parents in discipling their children?

All of our curricula include take-home pages (called Growing in Faith Together Pages or GIFT Pages for the Sunday School curricula). These take-home pages provide parents with a tool that will assist them in taking the biblical truths learned and guiding their children to personal application. Parents have the greatest opportunity for “teachable moments”—situations that arise in everyday life that can be opportunities to apply the truth of God. These pages provide parents with the following:

- Lesson title, main ideas, selected memory verse (or key verse), and a list of Scripture presented in the lesson.
- A brief summary of the lesson.
- Questions to further spiritual discussion and heart application.
- Suggestions for acting on biblical truth.

How is your Midweek Bible Curricula different from your Sunday School curricula?

Our Midweek Bible curricula are 26-28 lessons, as opposed to our 40-week Sunday School curricula. This allows more flexibility in the midweek program and the curricula provide more opportunities and ideas for interactive games, earning various badges (for the younger ages), and more practical application.

Our church is using Awana for our midweek program. Can Truth78 curricula be incorporated into the program?

Definitely! Churches can use the Bible lessons of our Midweek Bible curricula along with the other components of their Awana program.

Do you have any curricula that could be used for the whole church, across all age ranges?

Yes, we have two curricula options that have been written specifically for intergenerational classes—[The Righteous Shall Live By Faith](#), and [Lord, Teach Us to Pray](#).

Do you have devotional resources for families?

See our [Family Devotions](#) page for a wide variety of resources.

Step 4 – Recruit, Encourage, and Equip Volunteers for Kingdom Ministry

One of the best ways for pastors and ministry leaders to recruit a team of dedicated, Jesus-loving, God-honoring volunteers is to diligently...

1. Inspire them with a *big vision* for what they are doing and why they are doing it. Give them *big reasons* why investing in the discipleship of children and youth is so important.
2. Carefully and prayerfully recruit volunteers, and then fully equip, train, and encourage them every step of the way.

Recruiting Ministry Volunteers

- [“Recruiting, Equipping, and Retaining Volunteers”](#) (a six-page PDF outlining all the basics)
- [“Recruiting, Equipping, and Retaining Volunteers”](#) (an audio seminar by Pastor Gil McConnell)
- [Utter Dependency on God through Prayer](#) (a helpful booklet as you ground your endeavors in prayer)

Encouraging Ministry Volunteers

- Send the short article [“Sunday School as Liberation”](#) by John Piper to your volunteers.
- Use the four-part short video series [“Foundations for Ministry”](#) as part of your volunteer training.
- Encourage your volunteers to watch [“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God to the Next Generation”](#) by Pastor Mark Vroegop.

- Give your teachers a copy of [Zealous: 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generations](#), and/or direct them to the [seven-part blog series](#) that highlights each commitment.

Equipping and Training Volunteers for their Specific Roles

- Make use of our free “[Core Training Series](#).” These concise PDF’s provide every ministry volunteer with basic help to flourish in their specific classroom roles. Print or email any documents for your volunteers that correspond to their particular roles.
- Provide specific, applicable, in-person training for the various classroom roles (i.e., teacher, worship leaders, small group leader, etc.).
- Clearly communicate to your volunteers child check-in/check-out policies, behavioral guidelines for students, getting substitutes, classroom schedule, etc.
- Make sure your teachers and students have all the necessary components of the curricula (i.e., visual resources, parent pages, workbooks, etc.).
- Prepare the classrooms. Configure them in a way that is most conducive for learning, being both teacher- and student-friendly.
- Have all necessary supplies fully stocked and easily accessible (i.e., crayons, markers, tape, glue, paper, etc.).

Plan an Official “Launch”

Ask your pastor/elders if they could officially commission—“launch”—children’s ministry volunteers. This could be as simple as having them stand during the corporate worship time and praying for them and the students. This would be a great way to highlight the importance and responsibility of the whole body of Christ in telling “the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done” (Psalm 78:4).

Step 5 – Prepare Parents and Students for the Coming Year

Before the new classes and programs begin this fall, clearly communicate to parents and children what the year will entail. Here are three main categories of information to communicate...

- a glorious vision for pursuing the comprehensive discipleship of children.
- the importance of a robust church and parent partnership.
- information regarding the “nuts and bolts” of the upcoming year.

While best done by hosting a type of formal “Parent Orientation” meeting and/or a “Parent-Student Open House” in classrooms before the school year begins, other forms of communication can be used, including emails, monthly newsletters, web meetings, etc. The following are some helpful ideas and resources.

Communicate a glorious vision for pursuing the comprehensive discipleship of children to parents.

- Share the four-part video series “[Foundations for Ministry](#)” with parents.
- Ask your senior pastor and/or other ministry leaders to address parents and herald the vision and mission for the coming year.
- Share the “[Developing a Vision-Oriented Ministry to Children and Youth](#)” document with parents.
- Briefly explain how your scope and sequence and curricula align with the vision and mission. If you are using Truth78 curricula, [this link](#) may prove helpful for parents.

Communicate the importance of a robust church and parent partnership.

- Clearly articulate both the distinct and shared roles and expectations of church and home in the discipleship of children. (See “[Partnering with Parents](#)” and “[Partnering with Your Church](#)” for a more in-depth explanation and practical tips.)
- Highlight the appropriate safety measures in place to guard children both physically and emotionally (i.e., background checks on all volunteers, behavioral and discipline policies, etc.).
- Extend an “open invitation policy” for parents to visit their child’s classroom. (See “[Involving Parents in the Classroom](#).”)
- Provide parents with all relevant contact information and/or procedures for addressing questions and concerns.
- Encourage ministry volunteers to connect with the parents of the children they will serve.

Communicate information regarding the “nuts and bolts” of the upcoming year.

- Share with parents an overview of the curricula their child will be learning (i.e., send them a copy of the scope and sequence available with each Truth78 curricula, such as [this sample](#)).
- Provide an overview of a typical class session (e.g., worship in song, Bible lesson, small group discussion, prayer, activity, dismissal).

- Introduce the teachers and other volunteers who will be serving in the classroom.
- Have parents (or guardians) register each child in order to ensure that volunteers have all the information they need for the well-being of the child and a means of readily contacting parents.
- Clearly explain expectations: bringing Bibles (including which translation), bathroom breaks, check-in and dismissal policies, and behavioral guidelines, etc. Consider sharing with parents, "[Preparing Your Child's Heart for Sunday School](#)."
- Welcome questions, feedback, and concerns. Make sure to emphasize that you are there to assist parents in the discipleship of their children.