

BASIC TRAINING: SESSION 1

teaching the gospel to children¹

At Matthias Lot, we believe that children, just like adults, need Jesus' saving love (Romans 3:23; 6:23). They need the truth of God's gospel applied to their hearts.

As a mlkidz volunteer, you should boldly teach the gospel message. The facts of the gospel are simple. One simple way to think about the gospel is to see it as the power of God for salvation:²

THE GOSPEL IS GOD'S POWER FOR SALVATION.

(God—Humanity—Jesus—By Faith, Not Works)

1. **God** is our holy and good Creator, and he demands that we be faithful in our relationship with him. This means knowing him, obeying him, and loving him (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

Human beings are created to be dazzled. We are all worshipers at heart. Our desire as Christians is to raise a generation of children that are dazzled by God. We tell the next generation about God's great rescue plan for humanity because His greatness cannot be measured, and he is the only true source of salvation and joy (Psalm 145:3-7).³

2. **Humanity** is in rebellion against God. We have chosen to be dazzled by our own greed and self-interest rather than be dazzled by God. Children, just like adults, are sinful and in need of a Savior. This is one purpose of the Bible's teaching. As it shows us the holiness and goodness of God, it also shows us our rebellion and our sin (Galatians 3:10; Romans 3:20, 23).

When we teach children about God's plan to save humanity, it is necessary to teach them their personal need for the Savior. We do not flatter or deceive children by teaching them that their nature is good. Rather, we tenderly teach a child about his or her own failures—pointing out the specific sins to which children are prone (greed, pride in performance, lying, disobedience to parents, etc.). Our goal is to be tender but true. We pray that the Holy Spirit will use the truth to bring conviction to the child's heart and conscience, and ultimately to give the gift of faith.⁴

3. **Jesus** took the punishment for our sin by bearing the punishment we deserve to the cross (Galatians 3:13). He makes us right with God because he lives to speak to the Father on our behalf (Romans 4:25; 1 John 2:1).

Jesus says, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children" (Matthew 19:14 NLT). Jesus' words encourage us to simply and clearly teach about his person and work:

First, we must show Jesus to children in simple language. It is necessary to avoid complicated theological jargon and simply teach the message of Jesus' death and resurrection. As Martin Luther has said:

¹ Entire document has been adapted from Sojourner Community Church, Louisville, KY

² Adapted from Jeff Vanderstelt and Soma Communities in Tacoma, WA.

³ Adapted from Tedd Tripp, "Session 14: Helping kids see God's glory," in *Case for Kids* DVD (Shepherd Press/CCEF, 2006).

⁴ Adapted from Charles Spurgeon, *Come Ye Children*. Available at *The Spurgeon Archive*, www.spurgeon.org

When I preach I don't look to the doctors and [government officials] of whom there are about forty in this church. I have an eye to the many young people, children and servants of whom there are more than two thousand. I preach to these, addressing myself to their needs. If other people don't want to listen to this approach, then they can always walk out! An upright, godly and true preacher should direct his preaching to the poor, simple sort of people.⁵

When teaching in mlkidz, you should avoid using church clichés and technical terminology (election, justification, sanctification, etc.) unless the terms are carefully defined.

Second, we must teach children about Jesus—not merely give them moral lessons. Many children's curriculums use Bible stories (David and Goliath, Daniel and the Lion's Den, etc.) to teach moral lessons such as "Be courageous!" These materials may accurately summarize the facts of a Bible story, but they draw a lesson from the story that the biblical author did not intend. The tendency is to draw moral lessons ("do this" or "don't do that") rather than seeing God's actions in history to save humanity:

It is possible to miss the main point or purpose of a particular Scripture [passage] because there are so many details given. The details are important because they support the main point... However, we can become lost in the details in such a way that we do not focus on the chief purpose of the passage.

The story about John the Baptist is a good example. God's purpose in sending John is very clear—he was to prepare the way for Jesus and get the people ready for Jesus. But for some people, the details are all they really know or remember, such as John's camel hair clothes, the leather belt around his waist, his food of locusts and wild honey, his preaching in the desert, and his addressing those who came as 'You [bunch of snakes]!' All of these are important details in the Scripture passage, but the main point here or in telling any bible story is the 'show them Jesus.' That's what John did; that is our calling as well. John the Baptist never lost his focus. He kept making the point over and over again: 'This is he who was spoken [about] through the prophet Isaiah;' Prepare the way for the Lord...;' 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'

Don't overlook or forget the details—just keep them in proper perspective. Reflect on the marvelous way God worked out all the details of accomplishing redemption for his people through his Son."⁶

At Matthias Lot, we believe that the stories of the Bible are not moralistic fables about the adventures of certain individuals who lived long ago. The Bible reveals God's plan to save the universe and humanity from sin through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Third, we must give priority to the work of Jesus' death and resurrection as facts of history. When speaking about the gospel to children, our temptation is to focus on the child's inner condition—their personal struggles with sin and obedience. Even the language we use can tempt children to see the gospel "more as what God is doing in me now, rather than what God did for me then."⁷

⁵ Martin Luther, *Table Talk* (H.G. Bohn, 1857), 427; quoted in Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church*, (RE:Lit/Crossway, 2008), 185.

⁶ *Show Me Jesus!* Toddler, Winter lesson 7.

⁷ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* (IVP, 2006), 176-77.

As a mlkidz volunteer, you must put your emphasis on the gospel as an historical fact. Phrases such as “Would you like to ask Jesus into your heart?” should always be avoided. While it is a Biblical truth that Christ is present with the Christian by his Spirit (Colossians 1:27; Ephesians 3:17), the work in our hearts is secondary.⁶ If we teach children *only* about the personal change that God does in hearts then we may inadvertently confuse or discourage them. When these children become aware of their sins, they may become introspective and worry, “How can Jesus live in my heart when I still get so angry?” Children must be taught to look outside of themselves to the love and forgiveness that comes because of Christ’s death and resurrection in history (Galatians 2:20). “One simple believing [look at] Christ will produce more light and peace and joy than a lifetime of looking within ourselves for evidences and signs of grace.”⁸

4. Christians respond to God **By Faith** and **Not By Works** (Ephesians 2:8-9). Children, just like adult sinners, are easily deceived and manipulated (Ephesians 4:14). Just like adults, they may be tempted to find assurance in their own good works or religious practices rather than in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Mlkidz volunteers should speak freely and often about the need to repent from sin and to trust in Christ. Encourage children to confess their sins and ask for mercy.

Do NOT offer false assurances. Do NOT assure them that a prayer for mercy (a “sinner’s prayer”) guarantees their eternal destiny. It does not. Human hearts long to find assurance in things that we can manipulate – our own knowledge, emotional experiences, prayers, or our works. We must discourage children from seeking assurance in such things. Many children have prayed a “sinner’s prayer” or “asked Jesus into their heart” without fully understanding and “owning” the gospel’s demands for repentance and faith. These are not true conversions, and “the last state is worse than the first if the ‘convert’ becomes disillusioned and hardened against the real gospel.”⁹

Do NOT pressure children for commitments. Rather, trust that God is already at work in their hearts! Your responsibility is to faithfully tell the gospel to them and leave the results to the Lord. Salvation is a work of God. We must teach children that assurance is found in Jesus Christ and his work alone. Trust that God the Holy Spirit will assure those who are truly changed (Rom 8:16). Trust that he will bring conviction or assurance as he sees fit. Trust God to work in the hearts of his children to bring them to himself through faith, in his time and in his ways.

NEXT STEPS¹⁰

With this gospel perspective in mind, our prayer is that mlkidz volunteers will have conversations with children about the gospel often.

So, as a mlkidz volunteers, **what do I do to encourage a child who expresses faith in Christ without overstepping or pressuring the child?**

- As stated above, stress the facts of the gospel. Teach children God’s laws and commands, which the Holy Spirit uses to bring conviction of sin (Deuteronomy 6). Then, teach them God’s promises and plainly speak about their need to repent from sin and trust Christ (Acts 2:38-39).
- Remember, as stated above, that children are easily deceived and manipulated, and, just like adults, they are tempted to trust in their own works rather than Christ. Moreover, signs of true faith are sometimes harder to recognize in children than they are in adults. It can be difficult to tell the difference between natural maturing and a Holy Spirit-wrought change of heart—this is especially true since children naturally want to please adults. Do NOT use abstract language (‘Jesus in my heart’), offer false assurances, or pressure children for commitments.

⁸ The phrase “ask Jesus into your heart” is neither commanded in the Scriptures nor found as a description of conversion.

⁹ Octavius Winslow, *Soul-Depths and Soul-Heights*, (Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 4.

¹⁰ Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 177.

- Do not be skeptical about a child's sincerity. Although we want to be careful not to give a child a false sense of security, neither do we want to unwittingly discourage children from believing that God can grant them saving faith as a child.
- Trust God to work in the hearts of his children to bring them to himself through faith, in his time and in his ways. Your responsibility is to faithfully tell the gospel to them and leave the results to the Lord. We can trust that the Holy Spirit will assure those who are truly changed (Romans 8:16).

What if a child—on her own initiative—says she is trusting in Christ?

- Express joy, but use discernment about validating that expression as one of saving faith. Offer encouragement to her to continue placing her trust in Christ throughout her life.
- If a child from a believing family speaks with you about the gospel, let her parents know the questions their child is asking. Parents are called to be the primary shepherds of their children, and they should be closely involved when their children are asking these questions. Encourage parents, with the support of Matthias Lot's pastoral leadership, to discern their child's heart carefully.
- If a child from an un-churched family speaks with you about the gospel, let the mlkidz leadership know so we can explain the gospel clearly to the child's parents, let them know about the questions their child is asking, encourage them to continue bringing their child to church gatherings, and build a relationship with them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How often have you spoken about the gospel with the children in your classroom? Has the gospel been central in all of your Bible lessons in the past? If yes, share a testimony about how this has influenced the way you read the Bible yourself. If no, how can you make a change for the future?
2. Do you believe that children can understand the gospel? Can you give evidence of children believing from the Scriptures? Has unbelief kept you from teaching the gospel to children in your home or classroom?
3. Have you ever been tempted to assure a child that he or she is going to heaven simply because they have prayed for mercy or have become aware of their sin? Why is this dangerous?
4. When you talk about the gospel, do you put more emphasis on the objective work that Jesus did in history or on the work he has done in your life? Why is it important to put a strong emphasis on what Christ has done?

* Entire document has been adapted from Sojourner Community Church, Louisville, KY

BASIC TRAINING: SESSION 2

teaching children with excellence¹¹

Mlkidz is our ministry to families, which includes children as young as newborns to kids in fifth grade. The philosophy of education for mlkidz is modeled after the progression found in Psalm 78:5-7. These verses state:

He established a testimony for Jacob and established the law in Israel that he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

From their earliest years, our infants are taught basic Bible doctrines and stories as they are spoken in blessings and prayers. Our toddlers and preschoolers see and memorize basic Bible truths. In our elementary classrooms, there is an emphasis on knowing how the major Bible doctrines and stories are related. Children learn Bible themes, start to read the Bible for themselves, and are taught to apply the Bible's promises to their lives. In middle and high school, our students are taught to live out their faith in community through actions and words.

Mlkidz is not a babysitting service, but rather, a safe place where children can learn with their peers more about God's greatness and His work through His Son. The goal for our children is to go on a spiritual journey rooted in Christ as they grow up under your leadership and influenced by this community of believers around them.

STAGE 1: BABIES (AGES 0 – 1)

Gospel through Love... In our baby's classroom we teach children the gospel through love, care and basic prayers and baby bible stories.

STAGE 2: TODDLER & PRESCHOOL (AGES 2 – 5)

Basic Components... In our Toddler and Preschool classes, we begin to teach the vocabulary of faith by presenting Bible stories from the entire Bible, basic doctrines, and memory verses. Even children this young are able to acquire proper beliefs and learn what God requires of them.

STAGE 3: YOUNGER ELEMENTARY (KINDERGARTEN – 1ST GRADE)

Adding to the Basics... In our Younger Elementary classes, we teach stories from the entire Bible. The children begin to learn biblical truths and gain some familiarity with how they relate to one another. Chronology is considered in this class, but it is periodically ignored; children at this age cannot handle it developmentally. They continue to add the basics to their repertoire, learning how the different Bible stories and basic doctrines relate to each other and ultimately point to Christ. This is essential before putting all the pieces together in order.

STAGE 4: MIDDLE ELEMENTARY (GRADES 2 –3)

Components grouped thematically... Our Middle Elementary class integrates Bible stories around certain unifying themes such as worship, grace, mission, trusting God, and servants of God. We even begin to teach about the themes of biblical manhood and womanhood. Because children at this age are developing skills of conceptual thinking, discovery of truths from Scripture through comparing, contrasting, and analyzing is emphasized. The second year of the Middle Elementary curriculum begins to acquaint students with chronological sequencing. At this age we begin to group the individual basics together thematically.

¹¹ Entire document has been adapted from Sojourner Community Church, Louisville, KY

STAGE 4: OLDER ELEMENTARY (GRADES 4 –5)

Components aligned... Our Older Elementary class builds on the same foundation as our Middle Elementary classes. Preteens develop an understanding of how God has revealed himself in his Word by studying God's redemptive plan through a survey of all the books of the Bible. The emphasis is that Jesus Christ is central in all of God's Word. The Older Elementary class puts the basics in order. The holes must line up, and the basics must be in proper relationship to one another. The students discover the development of God's plan to redeem his people throughout history.

BREAK OUT SESSIONS FOR CLASSROOM LEADERS:

Take several minutes to read the material for your age group aloud. Then, answer the discussion questions as a group.

- If you work with Toddlers & Preschoolers (ages 2 – 5), begin on page 7.
- If you work with Elementary classes (kindergarten – 5th grade), begin on page 11.

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS (AGES 2 – 5)

teaching basics through structured time and play

Matthias Lot expects its teachers to provide a loving atmosphere as they teach toddlers and preschoolers about God's love for them.

Young children do well with a basic routine. In terms of schedule and space, each class moves progressively through times and places designated for play, music, the Bible story, and sensory activities. The themes of the Bible story are integrated into some aspects of the schedule so that music and activities reflect the themes of each lesson.

CLASSROOM SCHEDULE:

- **Welcome (5 minutes):** Greet each child and parent warmly as he or she comes into the classroom, and encourage him or her to gather at the activity area. The *Welcome* segment is usually designed to introduce the week's Bible story. This preparation activity is designed to engage the child's senses and expand each child's vocabulary and their understanding of the world in Bible times and today. Focus on active learning: children remember what they do as well as what they hear. This part of the lesson is intended to capture the attention of the children, to set the stage for God's Word and whet their appetite for spiritual food.
- **Large Group Time (20-30 minutes):** Our Toddles and Preschool classes all join in one room for our large age specific worship. This time includes: worship, lesson video, scripture memory, and prayer. Singing reinforces teaching. After all, it is often what a person sings about God that he or she really believes and takes to heart. Moreover, children learn through singing what it means to worship in harmony as a community. Music for toddlers should have simple, understandable words and concrete concepts. With each song ask yourself, "What does this mean to the child?" Explain any words that may be unfamiliar to the kids.
- **Transition to Small Group Time (5 minutes):** Once the large group time is over, each class will be dismissed one at a time. For the remaining night classes will stay in their room for their Bible time, activity time, and structured play time.
- **Transition to Bible Time (5 minutes):** This activity is designed to help the children settle down for the Bible story. This provides an opportunity to be active to take care of those toddler wiggles, while other times it involves a puzzle, singing, rhythm poems, or discussion. Move children into a circle on the floor or have them sit in chairs and show them any props or visual aids you will use to help tell the story. Then hold up your *Bible*, open it to the Scripture passage for the lesson and keep it open as you teach. An example of one of the rhythm poems you can use is as followed:

Open, shut them,	Open, shut them,
Open, shut them,	Open, shut them,
Give a little clap.	Lay them in your lap.
- **Bible Time (5-10 minutes):** The Bible story is the main focus of each class. Since learning about God through the Bible is our primary point, put quality preparation into studying the Scripture passage and the *Bible Time* story, noting the simple vocabulary and sentence structure: the truths of Scripture are explained in a way the children will understand and enjoy. Use the story script simply to guide you as you present God's Word in an age-appropriate way to teach the lesson focus. Each successive class will build on these stories, bringing increasingly profound truths to the children's attention, so don't feel pressured to teach

everything there is to know in any given lesson. Be familiar enough with the story to tell it to the children (with or without reading it to them). Make a point to maintain eye contact and react to the children's body language (Are they interested in the story? Do they understand the point of the story?). Use the *Gospel Application and Big Questions* section (where each story is summarized in three or four short sentences with the focus on the gospel) as a quick reference of important point. Explain terms and describe the setting, but beware of adding extra-biblical thoughts to story characters. Use the visual aids in a variety of ways to keep the children's interest. Remember, a child's attention span is one minute per year of age, so toddlers have an attention span of two to three minutes. Make the most of these precious minutes!

- **Activities (10-20 minutes):** This part of the lesson will allow the children to explore the Bible story in a variety of ways. For toddlers, with their limited motor skills, the fun of crafts is in their creation rather than in the final product. The projects in the Activities section are designed to remind the students of the truths of Scripture and the Bible Time story. The Activities could best be described as “making show and tell.” Encourage the children to share their projects with their families. Also, optional activities are given to enhance the teacher's flexibility usually they include color sheets or the use of play-dough to make creations from the story.
- **Responses (5-10 minutes):** God's Word and his love elicit a response. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because he first loved us.” All response activities teach and encourage the children to trust, love and respond thankfully to God with their words and actions. For instance, you could sing one of the songs in the middle of the Bible Time story if the children become restless, or review the Bible story while you lead the children through the Responses. Pace the activities, alternating through “quiet times” and “active times.” Be sensitive to the moods and needs of your class: be able to sing at any moment or slip in a Major Bible Theme question during a conversation. To facilitate flexibility, the layout of the lesson enables the teacher to show both the story and the responses at the same time.
 1. **Let's Pray** – Prayer is talking to God, and God loves for us to talk to him about everything. Prayer should be interspersed throughout the class time, but remember to keep each prayer short. Begin Bible Time with prayer to show the children that you must depend on God's help to teach his Word. *Let's Pray* should be an instructional as well as a responsive time. Ask the children about their lives and pray for the specific things they mention (such as a new baby, a parent who is sick, a pet that died, etc.). Lead them in brief prayers by saying them phrase-by-phrase and having the children repeat after you.
 2. **Let's Memorize** – Although toddlers cannot read, they still need the encouragement and comfort of God's Word. Children have a great capacity for memorization—parents and teachers should take advantage of it! Scripture memorization will benefit them for a lifetime. As you teach Bible verses or Big Questions of the Bible (simple questions and answers that teach Bible doctrine), make a point to demonstrate and encourage reverence for God and his Word. When teaching memory work to toddlers, say one word and have them repeat it with you along with the hand motions. Continue one word at a time through the verse. Then start at the beginning and say two words and have them repeat; continue this process until they can say the whole.
- **Guided Play (10 minutes):** When at play, children learn how the gospel relates to live at various centers in the classroom. It is helpful to assign a teacher or helper to each area of the classroom so that all children get maximum adult interaction. Times of guided play are obviously the least structured times in the schedule. During play times, our teachers are trained to be more diligent about discipline. This is by design. As children learn about life experiences

through guided play, they should also be learning about confession, extending forgiveness, and sharing/giving.

- During the guided play time kids can read books, build puzzles, play with blocks, and/or experience dramatic play (cars, trucks, dress up, kitchen play sets).
- **Final Focus (5 minutes):** Repeat, review, reorganize, and relax... In this step, children will do one or more of the following: pray, praise, or help clean up the room as they put into action what they have learned. *Final Focus* is a time to tie up the loose ends. Take a good look at the children at this point. Have you tried to do too much? Are they bored, indicating that you need to make additional plans for next week's lesson? Make a mental note at the end of each class of how you can make the class run more smoothly in the weeks ahead. Toddlers feel secure in an environment with predictability and structure, so you may want to close the class each week with a farewell song.
- **Clean Up Room (5 minutes):** At the end of the night, please make sure your classroom looks better than you found it. Spray or wipe down all toys with cleaning disinfectant. Wipe down all tables with cleaning disinfectant. Throw away all extra printed materials (lesson, activity sheets, etc.). Pin up this week's Memory Verse, Big Question, and Lesson Picture on the cork board. If this is the last week of a unit please take down the Memory Verse, all the Big Question sheets, and all the Lesson Pictures and put them in a folder labeled with the unit number (put the folder in your black closet).

HOW DO TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS LEARN?

2-year-old Characteristics – What are they like?

- Cannot think abstractly
- Need simple and concrete samples
- Often feel small and vulnerable
- Have a fear of separation from parents
- Are curious about everything
- Are physically active
- Have limited motor skills
- Are developing large motor skills
- Have a 200-word vocabulary
- Understand more words than they use
- Play NEAR others

3-year-old Characteristics – What are they like?

- Cannot think abstractly
- Need simple and concrete examples
- Like to be helpful
- Watch and imitate adults
- Can have sensible conversations
- Can sit a little longer
- Have limited coloring/gluing skills
- Follow simple directions
- Have a 1,500-word vocabulary
- Know some Bible words
- Play WITH others

4-5-year-old Characteristics – What are they like?

- Attention span lasts 5-10 minutes
- Play with others
- Literal thinkers
- Curious, imitative, and active
- Do not generalize
- Talkative
- Developing small muscle control
- Limited understanding of numbers, time and space
- Expanding vocabulary
- Tire easily
- Growing in independence
- Want to please
- Formulate ideas through concrete experience

What do they need?

- Opportunity to change activity often
- Social interaction, group games
- Imaginative activities and tasks to perform
- Plenty of opportunities to move around
- Setting that encourages learning by doing
- Opportunities to learn by specific actions
- References to what numbers mean or to geography too abstract
- Freedom with limits (routine & structure)
- Opportunities to practice cutting, pasting, drawing and coloring
- Opportunities to learn through language
- Concrete Bible stories, no abstract concepts
- To learn about God in terms of what he does rather than who he is

You are stepping in to assist parents and the church in nurturing these children. As you open up a new world of learning, provide a predictable, well-structured and caring atmosphere. Be creative as you prepare your lesson. You have permission to deviate from an activity in the curriculum (so long as you do not deviate from the Bible story and the gospel). Please mix things up if you know that what is given will not work with your kids.¹² Focus on the children, not the activities. If you have properly prepared for the lesson, you will be able to concentrate on the kids themselves. Know your kids—their likes and dislikes. Be particularly sensitive to children with special needs or those who have little security in their homes. To some degree, the church can supply these little ones with the sense of love, security, and family that they lack at home.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Our curriculum requires a fair amount of our teachers' time (preparation, vivid story-telling, having patience and loving curiosity with children). What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What can you do to improve where you are weak?
2. What can you do to make your classroom a welcoming environment for new children and parents?
3. What would you do if a new child with "special needs" arrived in your classroom? What might need to be modified in your lesson or schedule?
4. How well do you know the children that will be in your class? Do you know their names? Do you know their likes and dislikes? If you don't, what steps will you take to get to know these kids?

¹² Adapted for SojournKids from "Understanding Age Groups" and "Tips for Teachers," *Show Me Jesus! Toddler*, (Great Commission Publications).

ELEMENTARY (KINDERGARTEN – 5TH GRADE)

putting together God’s grand story

In our Elementary classrooms, our children continue to learn Bible basics, but, at this stage, our children also learn how to logically fit the Bible’s stories and basic doctrines together. Our goal is for preteens to develop an understanding of how God has revealed himself in his Word by studying God’s redemptive plan through a survey of all the books of the Bible. Our emphasis is that Jesus Christ is central in God’s entire grand story.

In session one, we discussed how the gospel is God’s power for salvation (*God – Humanity – Christ – By Faith, Not Works*). This is a thematic understanding of the gospel. When the Scriptures are read chronologically from Genesis to Revelation, we see that the gospel is also a grand story (*Creation—Fall—Redemption—Restoration*).

THE GOSPEL IS GOD’S STORY OF RECONCILIATION.¹³ **(Creation – Fall – Redemption – Restoration)**

When we read the Scriptures as a story, we come to know the *reason* for salvation—the gospel’s purpose. In this case the Good News is that God sent his Son to redeem the world and create a new humanity. Eventually the whole world will be renewed. Death, decay, injustice, and suffering will be all removed. (Ephesians 2:10,14-22; 2 Corinthians 5:15-21; Revelation 21). The gospel is not just about my individual happiness or God’s plan for my life. It is about God’s plan for the world. We pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The people of God are an alternative city/nation within a city/nation to display as a foretaste what the eternal city will be like (Jeremiah 29; Matthew 5:3-16; Luke 6:20-36; 1 Peter 2:9-12).

Consider all the places throughout Scripture where we see the people of God saved for this purpose. God, in Jesus Christ, has given us both the MESSAGE of reconciliation – *Gospel Power* – and the MINISTRY of reconciliation – *Gospel Purpose* (Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

PUTTING IT TOGETHER IN OUR HEARTS.

Because students in the elementary grades are developing skills of conceptual thinking, discovery of truths from Scripture through comparing, contrasting, and analyzing is emphasized. Elementary children are becoming critical thinkers, and, as they learn that the world doesn’t always work logically, they can become critical of others. In the elementary grades, children naturally become more critical (of parents, one another, and concepts they are taught). An additional goal at this stage is to encourage children to be self-critical. We pray that our children will learn to identify their own sins and the inconsistency that exists between what they say and what they do.

It makes sense to teach the message of the gospel as a story at this stage. As our children grow in their understanding of the world’s brokenness and inconsistency, we will share with them God’s grand rescue plan to repair and restore the broken universe. Our prayer is that our children will grow to express faith and want to join in God’s ministry of reconciliation.

¹³ This section is adapted from Jeff Vanderstelt and Soma Communities in Tacoma, WA.

CLASSROOM SCHEDULE:

- **Welcome (5 minutes):** Greet each child and parent warmly as he or she comes into the classroom, and encourage him or her to gather at the activity area. The *Welcome* segment is usually designed to introduce the week's Bible story. This preparation activity is designed to engage the child's senses and expand each child's vocabulary and their understanding of the world in Bible times and today. Focus on active learning: children remember what they do as well as what they hear. This part of the lesson is intended to capture the attention of the children, to set the stage for God's Word and whet their appetite for spiritual food.
- **Large Group Time (20-30 minutes):** Our Toddlers and Preschool classes all join in one room for our large age specific worship. This time includes: worship, lesson video, scripture memory, and prayer. Singing reinforces teaching. After all, it is often what a person sings about God that he or she really believes and takes to heart. Moreover, children learn through singing what it means to worship in harmony as a community. Music for toddlers should have simple, understandable words and concrete concepts. With each song ask yourself, "What does this mean to the child?" Explain any words that may be unfamiliar to the kids.
- **Transition to Small Group Time (5 minutes):** Once the large group time is over, each class will be dismissed one at a time. For the remaining night classes will stay in their room for their Bible time, activity time, and structured play time.
- **Bible Time (10-15 minutes):** The Bible story is the main focus of each class. This is the heart of the lesson, so be well prepared to present it simply and effectively. Use the story script simply to guide you as you present God's Word in an age-appropriate way to teach the lesson focus. Each successive class will build on these stories, bringing increasingly profound truths to the children's attention, so don't feel pressured to teach everything there is to know in any given lesson. Be familiar enough with the story to tell it to the children (with or without reading it to them). Make a point to maintain eye contact and react to the children's body language (Are they interested in the story? Do they understand the point of the story?). This is a time of interactive learning. Your preparation involves learning how to facilitate discussion rather than lecturing, telling Bible stories, or dispensing Bible facts.
- **Activities (10-15 minutes):** Every educator knows that activities and arts and crafts reinforce teaching. This part of the lesson will allow the children to explore the lesson focus and Bible story in a variety of ways. The activities in this section are designed to remind kids of the truths of Scripture and the Bible Time story. Be attentive to your children and their varying learning styles when working on activities. Be ready for kids that may need to "talk out" the lesson rather than work it out on paper. Be creative without diverting from the lesson's main point.
- **Responses (5-10 minutes):** God's Word and his love elicit a response. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us." All response activities teach and encourage the children to trust, love and respond thankfully to God with their words and actions. For instance, you could sing one of the songs in the middle of the Bible Time story if the children become restless, or review the Bible story while you lead the children through the Responses. Pace the activities, alternating through "quiet times" and "active times." Be sensitive to the moods and needs of your class: be able to sing at any moment or slip in a Major Bible Theme question during a conversation. To facilitate flexibility, the layout of the lesson enables the teacher to show both the story and the responses at the same time.

1. **Let's Pray** – Prayer is talking to God, and God loves for us to talk to him about everything. Prayer should be interspersed throughout the class time, but remember to keep each prayer short. Begin Bible Time with prayer to show the children that you must depend on God's help to teach his Word. *Let's Pray* should be an instructional as well as a responsive time. Ask the children about their lives and pray for the specific things they mention (such as a new baby, a parent who is sick, a pet that died, etc.). Lead them in brief prayers by saying them phrase-by-phrase and having the children repeat after you.
 2. **Let's Memorize** – Scripture memory is an important part of our mlkidz curriculum since the Bible is the foundation of all that we teach. Also you can introduce kids to the Big Questions (theology) of the Bible. Split kids up in pair and have them practice the Memory Verse and Big Questions.
- **Final Focus (5 minutes):** Repeat, review, reorganize, and relax... In this step, children will do one or more of the following: pray, praise, or help clean up the room as they put into action what they have learned. *Final Focus* is a time to tie up the loose ends. Take a good look at the children at this point. Have you tried to do too much? Are they bored, indicating that you need to make additional plans for next week's lesson? Make a mental note at the end of each class of how you can make the class run more smoothly in the weeks ahead.
 - **Clean Up Room (5 minutes):** At the end of the night, please make sure your classroom looks better than you found it. Spray or wipe down all toys with cleaning disinfectant. Wipe down all tables with cleaning disinfectant. Throw away all extra printed materials (lesson, activity sheets, etc.). Pin up this weeks Memory Verse, Big Question, and Lesson Picture on the cork board. If this is the last week of a unit please take down the Memory Verse, all the Big Question sheets, and all the Lesson Pictures and put them in a folder labeled with the unit number (put the folder in your black closet).

ELEMENTARY AGE-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS:

Younger Elementary – Kindergarten – 1st Grade

There is tremendous variation in reading and writing skills among 6 and 7 year-olds. You will need to structure your teaching in a way that accommodates both readers and non-readers.

- **Kindergarten**
 - Think in literal and concrete terms
 - Can follow specific instructions
 - Have difficulty sitting still for very long
 - Have a lot of energy
 - Like all kinds of games
 - Need to feel capable
 - Want to please teachers
 - Are talkative
 - Are developing hand-eye coordination
 - Think in terms of good and bad
 - Enjoy Bible stories
 - Understand God's love through personal experience
 - Beginning to read
- **1st Grade**
 - Have limited concept of time & space
 - Enjoy an ever-widening world
 - Like to make things
 - Enjoy organized games & group activities
 - Are developing small-muscle coordination
 - Want to win, but want things to be fair
 - Use their own experience to understand the experience of others
 - Want individual attention & affirmation
 - Like learning from the Bible
 - Make conclusions about God in concrete terms
 - Do not understand the spiritual nature of God
 - Developing reading skills

Middle Elementary – Grades 2nd & 3rd

Second and third graders are quickly growing in their ability to reason and discover, unlike younger children, who can think only literally. Middle Elementary students are able to discuss ideas; they can compare, contrast, analyze and discover.

- Think in terms of right and wrong
- Need to express feelings
- Do not think in abstract terms
- Want to learn
- Have good hand-eye coordination
- Enjoy physical activity & may have trouble calming down
- Ability to read and write well varies
- Are developing values
- Enjoy friends of the same sex
- Are eager to please and want to be liked
- Are becoming conscious of self & of sin
- Often begin to feel the need for a personal relationship with God
- Are developing skills of comparing, analyzing and evaluating

Older Elementary – Grades 4th & 5th

Fourth and fifth graders are ready to handle organized units of Bible study. They can dig into the big themes of the Scriptures, presented historically and chronologically. Preteens also love social interaction and thrive in-group settings. Use class time for interactive learning, such as cooperating in small or larger groups, role-playing, brainstorming and the like. Doing things this way will keep the students eager to come back for more, help class members get to know each other and help you get to know them!

- **Growing Physically**
 - Can't sit still for long
 - Approaching (or in) puberty
- **Growing Emotionally**
 - Set a high standard for themselves
 - Are more aware of personal shortcomings
 - Generally dislike outward displays of affection
- **Growing Socially**
 - Need relational and social interaction
 - Are competitive
 - Can exhibit negative behavior, such as bullying or teasing
 - Want to be like the group
 - Are strongly concerned about fairness
- **Growing Mentally**
 - Can think and reason; compare and contrast
 - Have mastered basic reading and writing skills
 - Memorize easily
 - Can work steadily for long periods
- **Growing Spiritually**
 - Understand the elements of the Christian faith
 - Are able to understand the history and chronology of Scripture
 - Are developing a value system
 - Are finding out what it means to belong to Christ and his Church
 - Are learning to put into practice what they know from God's Word

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Our curriculum requires a fair amount of our teachers' time (preparation, vivid story-telling, having patience and loving curiosity with children). What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What can you do to improve where you are weak?
2. What can you do to make your classroom a welcoming environment for new children and families?
3. How well do you know the kids in your class? Do you know their names? Do you know their likes and dislikes? What steps can you take to get to know these kids?

BASIC TRAINING: SESSION 3

the nuts and bolts of loving children as mlkidz volunteers¹⁴

Mlkidz would not be able to love and care for children and families if it were not for all our **faithful volunteers** (teachers & lot families). We use the term volunteer, but a more fitting word would be “servants”, which communicates that our teachers and leaders are not just random volunteers who help out with kids, but men and women who see their role to sacrificially serve like Christ. Throughout the gospels Jesus reminds his disciples that he came to serve and in Matthew 20:26 Jesus states, “...But whoever would be great among you must be your **servant**.” Paul constantly calls us to be men and women who understand our calling to be servants of God for his kingdom. 1 Corinthians 9:19 says, “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a **servant** to all, that I might win more of them.” Our hope is that our teachers and lot families will see themselves not just as volunteers who show up on a Wednesday night to help provide childcare because it is a good thing to do, but as servants sacrificing time, energy and love for the sake of Christ as they help children and families experience the love of God in tangible ways.

THE GOAL & HOPE OF ALL MLKIDZ VOLUNTEERS:

Reflections on 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:2:

But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped us. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow-worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.

Paul loves being with fellow Christians. He loves to minister to them, and he longs to be with them. If you look ahead to verse 13, you see that Paul was striving to see them presented “blameless and holy in the presence of God our Father” (3:13). Paul does everything that he can to be with Thessalonians and, when he can’t, he sends a trusted replacement.

“Will you hate to be apart from your kids—to miss Sunday school? Will you look forward every week to seeing the kids again in order to minister to them? Will you truly be concerned about them (3:5) and pray for them between seeing them (3:10)? If, despite your longings to be there, you can’t get to Sunday school, will you make sure you send a trusted replacement (3:2)?”

—Stephanie Carmichael, *Their God Is So Big*

Paul’s example is certainly a daunting one to follow. That sort of love and commitment only comes from God, and we will only be filled with this love if we ask for it in prayer (3:12). Moreover, we can only love the kids we serve in this way if we see them with heavenly eyes. The Thessalonians are Paul’s “glory and joy” because they will be like crowns for him in the presence of Christ (2:19-20).

As we begin this season of service, let’s ask God to fill us with love and joy in the service that he’s given us. May he help us to see the kids that we’re serving as our joy and crown. With these words in mind, let’s look at our job descriptions.

¹⁴Entire document has been adapted from Sojourner Community Church, Louisville, KY

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MLKIDZ LEADERSHIP TEAM:

- Pray for mlkidz children and volunteers.
- Staff and recruit for all mlkidz volunteers' positions.
- Set a clear direction and vision for the future of mlkidz.
- Equip all mlkidz volunteers to keep Jesus first in their teaching by providing teachers with gospel-centered curriculum and training.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to develop their teaching skills through various means.
- Train all servants to follow the mlkidz guidelines.
- Supply our volunteers with everything necessary for their ministry to children and families.
- Enforce mlkidz policies for safety and security.
- Listen to the concerns and ideas of mlkidz volunteers and parents as we work together to grow and improve mlkidz.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS (TEACHERS & LOT FAMILIES):

Specific responsibilities of lead teachers are as follows:

- Pray for the mlkidz leadership team, about your lesson, for the spiritual development of the kids in your class, and for your own spiritual growth.
- Read and study the lesson that you will teach each week. As you prepare, think especially about how the weekly lesson communicates the gospel.
- As a matter of hospitality, arrive at 6:15pm.
 - Check-in and get name tag
 - Setup and prepare your teaching area.
 - Organize all props or supplies you need for teaching or leading your class.
 - Pray with the lot family serving and the rest of the mlkidz team.
- Grow in your knowledge of education and theology.
- Teach with excellence and always look for ways that you can improve.
- Provide feedback about the curriculum and your classroom experience to the mlkidz leadership.
- Remain until parents pick up all children.
- Leave the classroom better than you find it.
 - Clean up all messes. Put toys and supplies in tubs and put back in correct storage boxes
 - Sanitize toys, tables, chairs, the diaper changing area, etc.
- Find substitutes to take your responsibilities when you must miss your assigned day and let mlkidz leadership know who you are switching responsibilities with.
- Have fun, and share the love of Christ.

Specific responsibilities of lot family leaders:

- Pray for the mlkidz leadership team, for the spiritual development of the kids, and for your own lot families' spiritual growth.
- Gather the right number of volunteers to serve on Wednesday night. If your lot family will be short volunteers, reach out to your fold leader for help filling the spots. It is the lot family leaders' responsibility to make sure they have appropriate leaders for each class.
- As a matter of hospitality, arrive at 6:15pm.
 - Check-in and get name tag
 - Meeting together with the mlkidz host for the night to go over everything.
 - Pray with your lot family and the rest of the mlkidz team.
 - Send out your lot family to their assigned room.
 - Have a few volunteer's welcome families at the check-in station

Specific responsibilities of all classroom volunteers (lot family volunteers):

- Pray for the mlkidz leadership team, about your lesson, for the spiritual development of the kids in your class, and for your own spiritual growth.
- As a matter of hospitality, arrive at 6:15pm.
 - Check-in and get name tag
 - Meeting together with the mlkidz host for the night to go over everything.
 - Pray with your lot family and the rest of the mlkidz team.
 - Send out your lot family to their assigned room.
- Greet each child and family as they arrive.
- Volunteers in the nursery should check diapers regularly and change them as needed. Every diaper should be checked.
- Remain until parents pick up all children.
- Leave the classroom better than you find it.
 - Clean up all messes. Put toys and supplies in tubs and put back in correct storage boxes
 - Sanitize toys, tables, chairs, the diaper changing area, etc.
- Have fun, and share the love of Christ.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS:

Things we expect parents to bring:

- For children two years-old and younger:
 - Bring an adequate supply of disposable diapers and wipes.
 - Bring an extra change of clothes.
 - Bring only plastic bottles or cups for milk, juice or water.
 - Place your child's name on his/her diaper bag, and label all items brought with your child (bottles, pacifiers, etc.).
- For all preschool children:
 - Please label all your child's belongings (sweaters, jackets, etc.).
 - Dress your preschooler in comfortable, washable clothing. Remember, preschoolers are active learners and need to be free to participate in learning activities.

Things we expect parents to do:

- General
 - Parents are requested to use only disposable diapers while at the church.
 - If any child demonstrates unacceptable behavior while at mlkidz, the parent will be asked to remain with the child until this behavior ceases.
 - Parents should label all items (such as bottles, cups, diaper bags, wipe containers, clothing etc.) with their child's first and last name.
 - Parents should notify the worker at the Check-In table and individual teachers of any allergy or special circumstances their child might have.
 - Parents are strongly encouraged to keep immunizations up-to-date.
- Attendance
 - Regular attendance, positive conversations about church and patience will alleviate most separation anxiety problems. Parents will be notified after 20 minutes if their child remains inconsolable and unable to adjust.

SAFETY AND SECURITY PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE:

Classrooms will open 15 minutes prior to regularly scheduled church activities and will close 15 minutes after the completion of church. Children should be picked up promptly after the service so they will not feel left behind.

Mlkidz does have an “open policy” so that parents/guardians have access to their children at all times. Parents may check on their child, but should ask the volunteer at the check-in table for assistance. Parents are usually asked not to go into the rooms to check on their children as this may upset them (he/she may think it is time to go), and it may upset the other children.

Nursing mothers are always welcome and free to use a designated room for nursing. Under no circumstances is a child to be left in a classroom or anywhere unattended. A parent must stay with the child until a teacher arrives.

Check-in Procedures:

- Once a child has check-in, the volunteer at the check-in table will ask for the family’s last name and about any allergies their child may have.
- The Host at the Check-in table or the lead volunteer in the room should ask any family with kids going into the Nursery whether there is any special feeding or changing instructions for the child. Parents will be asked to put this information in writing for the Nursery volunteers.
- Each child will receive a security tag with their name, allergy alerts, and an alphanumeric code on it. Place the nametag on the child’s back and give parents their security card with the matching code to their child. Parents should show these security cards to the volunteers in the nursery or teacher of their child’s class.
- Check-in volunteers will also remind of all children age 2 and under that if we need them will post their child number on the screens in the gathering room or call or text if a phone number is provided.
- Parents must remain on the church premises while their child is in the nursery.

Check-out Procedures:

- When picking up their child, parents will return to the same class they drop them off at.
- All security tags have a security number on it, and each tag must match in order to pick up a child and his or her belongings.
- Parents must have their security tag. If someone else will be picking up their child, they must have the security tag. Mlkidz volunteers must match the alphanumeric code on the child’s nametag to the sticker returned by the parent.
- In the event that a parent loses their security tag, they will be asked to show their driver’s license, and the volunteer will match this to the child’s nametag. The children’s safety is our first priority, even if it requires extra time.

General Classroom Security:

- All mlkidz volunteers must be at least 16 years of age, be covenant members of Matthias Lot, submitted to a criminal background/reference check, and have been asked to serve by a member of Matthias Lot. Anyone convicted of child/sexual abuse, dealing with unrepented sexual sin, or a related offense may not serve with mlkidz.
- All servants are required to go through training, which covers our philosophy of ministry, policies and procedures, curriculum, and guidelines for age-appropriate teaching.
- Mlkidz volunteers, Matthias Lot staff members, and other ministry volunteers will wear lanyard

or sticker nametags at all times.

- One adult should never be alone with a child or in a classroom.
- Open door policy... volunteers must keep classroom doors open at all times for safety and accountability measures.

Class Size Ratios:

- babies = 1 volunteer to every 3 children
- 2's thru 5's = 1 volunteer to every 6 children
- K thru 5th = 1 volunteer to every 8 children

Sickness Policy:

To ensure the health of our Matthias Lot families, parents are asked not to bring their child to a Matthias Lot program if one of the following conditions exists:

- Temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher in the last 24 hours
- Vomiting, abdominal pain or diarrhea
- Moderate or severe drainage from the mouth, nose, eyes
- Substantial chest congestion, coughing, or wheezing
- Unusual coloring of the skin (undiagnosed rash) or eyes (pink eye)
- Any symptoms of common contagious illness, such as H1N1 virus (swine flue), strep throat, head lice, RSV virus, whooping cough, viral meningitis or chicken pox
- Open skin lesions or Any infectious disease

****If a child exhibits any of the above symptoms (including, but not limited to, all listed above) on a Wednesday night, we reserve the right to ask the parent to remove him or her from the classroom.****

We define an infectious disease as any disease that spreads from one person to another person. These may include, but are not limited to, HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis, etc. We believe that God has called us to minister to all people and will, therefore, strive to provide a safe environment that is safe and accepting of everyone.

This list does not cover all instances where you'd want to keep your child home, so please use good judgment in order to prevent the spread of illness. Parents are asked to contact a member of Mlkidz leadership if their child contracts a communicable disease (such as chicken pox, head lice, fifth disease, etc.) after attending church.

Children who appear, or become, ill at church will be isolated from the other children, and the parent/guardian will be summoned immediately.

The medical condition of any child or mlkidz volunteer will be disclosed only to the extent necessary to minimize the health risk to the person and others. Matthias Lot's pastors and the mlkidz leadership team will be provided with the appropriate information concerning any special precaution that may be necessary. Matthias Lot will not disclose the health status of any individual without the express written consent and permission of that individual, or in the case of a child, their parent or guardian. Parents of children involved in mlkidz activities will not be privy to any confidential medical information.

The mlkidz sickness policy exists for the protection of the children in our care. We regret that it sometimes means not admitting children that have been brought to our public gatherings.

Food Policies:

Feeding young children is a serious responsibility. Therefore, children should be fed before coming to

church. Infants will be given formula, milk, juice or water when parents provide these items and written instructions. Time and circumstances may not allow for spoon-feeding. If there are any special feeding instructions for a child, please ask parents to put this information in writing.

A snack of water or juice and goldfish or animal crackers may be served to children two years old and up from time to time. If the lesson plan calls for any snacks or food tasting other than these, the classroom teacher will post an Allergy Alert at the classroom door to inform parents. **ALLERGY ALERTS ARE VERY IMPORTANT FOR ALL CHILDREN.**

Restroom and Diaper Policy:

- It is the policy of mlkidz that all diaper changes and all toilet assistance will be done in the presence of two adults. Please ask for help. Even older children who do not need toilet assistance should be taken to the restroom as a group, and two workers (male or female) should enter the restroom together with these children to provide the necessary supervision.
- To protect children and adults, **male volunteers** will not change diapers or provide toilet assistance to a child.
- The following guidelines for changing a diaper are designed to provide a more sanitary method of handling human waste and to decrease the spread of many infectious organisms.
 - Diapers are to be changed on an on porous surface.
 - Disposable gloves are to be worn by those changing a diaper.
 - Children are to be securely placed on the changing table.
 - After removing the diaper, the child's bottom and buttocks are to be thoroughly cleansed with moist disposable baby wipes (approved by the parents). Wipe the child from front to back to avoid urinary tract infections.
 - The diaper and wipes are to be wrapped in the diapers own plastic lined waste container.
 - After placing on a clean diaper and re-clothing the child, the changing surface should be cleaned thoroughly with disinfectant cleaner.
 - Gloves are to be removed and disposed of, and both child and personnel should wash their hands as previously described.
 - All diapers should be disposed of immediately in the bathroom or all trashcans.

Classroom Discipline:

Tips for Teachers:

- Be well prepared and organized. Be structured and well paced. Half of classroom management is knowing exactly what you are doing. If you are prepared and organized, children will not have the opportunity to get out of hand.
- Be consistent. Follow the model schedules provided in the education section of the manual. Follow them. Consistency will help children to feel safe and secure.
- Don't ask children to do activities that you are not prepared to do yourself.
- Praise children for good behavior ("Thank you, Ashley, for being kind to Jesse.")
- Give clear instructions, and repeat them. Model gentleness, and use a firm tone only when necessary.
- Use a signal to help children to be quiet. Be creative with your signal (e.g., flicker the lights; finger over lips; stand on one foot; etc.). Be consistent with your signal.
- Discuss obeying and being respectful with your class often, even with young toddlers.
- Watch your example. Children are great imitators.

*Standards of Behavior:*¹⁵

The effective spiritual formation of all our children requires a stable environment. The role of mlkidz is to support and supplement parental training by upholding high standards of behavior, respect and discipline. Some of the expectations we have for children include:

- Child participates with a willing heart, eager to learn and obey. The attitude should be respectful to the authority.
- The child is to avoid being disruptive or a distraction to the mission and purpose of mlkidz
- Disrespect (whether verbally, by gesture, in attitude, or by action) is unacceptable.
- Misbehavior (including, but not limited to, persistent talking, distracting others, not following instructions, ignoring instructions or directions, or interacting inappropriately with others in the class) is unacceptable. We will be tolerant with younger children and toddlers, but even a young child cannot be permitted to bite, hit or harm other children. Older children may not participate in inappropriate hitting, grabbing or similar behavior generally referred to as “roughhousing.” They may not belittle, mock, laugh at, name call, or display any similar inappropriate behavior towards their classmates.

Disciplining Misbehavior:

When any of the above situations occur, the following course of action will be taken:

- First, the teacher or volunteer will clearly and gently identify and explain to the child the inappropriateness of his/her behavior, and offer instruction regarding the correct way to conduct him or herself. The child will then be allowed to return to the regular activity.
 - Walk to or stand by a child who is being disruptive.
 - Make eye contact with child. Get on their level. Know their name and speak their name as you speak to them about their unruly behavior.
 - With younger children, redirect the child to a new activity, giving the child a choice of two options: (“Billy, would you like to play with a truck or a ball?”)
- Use time-outs when necessary. (One minute per year of the child’s age. Make sure the child is away from other children and classroom activity.) This will sometimes require securing help from a mlkidz leadership team member on call.
 - Give one warning before implementing a time-out except in the case of hitting, kicking, biting, hair pulling, etc.
 - The purpose of a time-out is to stop negative behavior, talk about the offense, give correction and teach forgiveness.
 - Encourage repentance when necessary. Have the child ask for forgiveness (“Will you still be my friend even though I took your toy?”).
- Confidentially share the situation with the child’s parents when class is over. Make sure you honor the child and at the same time, encourage the parents. Allow the parent to address their child either in the classroom or in another suitable location.
- If the above steps do not correct the behavior, contact someone on the mlkidz leadership team, who will remove the parent from the service and ask him or her to remove the child. If this happens, the parent must remain in the classroom when he or she next attends and until the unacceptable behavior ceases.
- Expect God to work on His timetable in the children’s lives (and yours).

Limitations:

No child at Matthias Lot will be subjected to corporal punishment (including, but not limited to, rough handling, ear pulling, shaking, slapping, hitting, and spanking); emotional abuse (including, but not limited to, name calling, shaming, threatening, humiliation, or yelling); or the use of physical restraint

¹⁵ Adapted from Grace Community Church, Dallas, TX

(unless restraint is necessary to protect others from harm). Do not touch a child for disciplinary purposes unless it is necessary to restrain the child to protect others. If a volunteer or staff is guilty or accused of inappropriate action toward a child, he or she may be subject to discipline by the church and/or removal from the ministry. Furthermore, he or she may be subject to criminal and/or civil assault charges under the laws of the state of Missouri.

SANITATION & HYGIENE:

The very nature of childhood behavior can create an environment that has the potential to spread infection. Common childhood diseases can be communicated by fecal-oral contamination, by contact with respiratory secretions, by person-to-person contact, or by contact with saliva, waste products and blood. Therefore, it is our commitment to try and maintain the safest, cleanest atmosphere possible to ensure the health and welfare of all children.

Universal Precautions:

- Disposable gloves are to be worn when contact with body fluids is anticipated. This includes blood, stool, urine, nasal discharge, eye secretions and vomit. They must be discarded after each use and are never to be washed and reused.
- A disinfectant spray will be used to sanitize areas that are routinely in contact with children, such as diaper changing stations, toys, cribs, mattresses, walkers, etc., after each service and during the session if needed. Objects to be disinfected include toys, teaching pictures, blocks, tables, chairs, cribs, shelves, walkers, swings, doorknobs and changing surfaces. These items should be disinfected after each session or, if appropriate, after each use by an individual child (such as a toy that has been mouthed by a child). Do as much disinfecting as possible.
- Hand-washing – Strict hand washing with soap and water is of utmost importance in preventing the spread of infection. Wash your own hands often, and encourage children to wash their hands as well.

When to wash hands:

- Upon arrival to the classroom.
- After removing disposable gloves used for any reason.
- After changing a diaper and removing disposable gloves.
- After assisting a child with toileting.
- After wiping a child's nose or mouth.
- Before and after attending to an injury.
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty or after cleaning a room, toys or bathroom.
- Before leaving the children's area.

How to wash your hands:

- Wet hands with warm running water.
- Apply a generous amount of antibacterial soap.
- Scrub hands vigorously for 10-15 seconds, front, back and between fingers (Sing the ABC song; preach the gospel to yourself).
- Rinse hands thoroughly under running water.
- Dry hands with disposable paper towels.
- Waterless hand sanitizers are not to replace washing hands with soap and water.

When to wash a child's hands:

- After toileting and diaper changes
- After inside and outside activities
- Before snacks and food-tasting experiences
- After blowing or wiping their nose or sneezing

Linens:

All linens, including blankets, sheets, bumper pads, towels, rags and smocks worn by personnel will be laundered after each individual use. They are not to be shared among different children during one session. Mattresses will be washed with disinfectant solution after each use. Please remove any unused linens from your classroom at the end of class time.

PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, & SEXUAL ABUSE:¹⁶

Reporting:

In the case of suspected parental abuse, staff and volunteers will report concerns to the mlkidz elder, Jared Corzine or the mlkidz director, Kraig Kubicek. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person or the staff to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. Rather, we are responsible as a church to comply with the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and cooperate fully with Child Protection Services and the law enforcement officials in our community. At all times in such a process confidentiality will be upheld.

Who is considered to be a "mandatory reporter" of child abuse and neglect?

- Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe that a child is neglected or abused shall immediately cause an oral or written report to be made (KRS 620.030, section 1-3).
- This includes but is not limited to teachers, school personnel, or child-caring personnel. This makes anyone working with children at Matthias Lot a mandatory reporter.
- If child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, malnutrition) is suspected, notify Jarad Corzine or Kraig Kubicek. DO NOT DISCUSS WITH OTHER PARENTS OR CHILDCARE VOLUNTEERS.

How do I know if something is reportable or not?

CAPTA (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act) mandates "minimum definitions" for child abuse and sexual abuse. Child abuse or neglect is any recent act or failure to act:

- Resulting in imminent risk of serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation
- Of a child (usually a person under the age of 18, but a younger age may be specified in cases not involving sexual abuse)
- By a parent or caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare

Sexual abuse is defined as...

- Employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct; or
- Rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.
- There are many signs of child abuse. Any one sign may not mean anything, but if there are a number of signs, or if they occur frequently, you may suspect maltreatment. Some signs are (The information that follows is from the Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, Department of Health and Human Services, P.O. Box 1182, Washington D.C. 20013.

Telephone: 301-251- 5157):

- Physical:
 - Unusual bruises, welts, burns, fractures or bite marks.
 - Frequent injuries, always explained as accidental.
 - Wears concealing clothes to hide injuries.
 - Child seems frightened. Child seeks affection from any adult.
 - Unpleasant, hard to get along with, demanding, often does not obey.

¹⁶ Compiled by Kim Rees, Family Consultant for Home of the Innocents

- Emotional:
 - Self-destructive, apathetic, depressed, withdrawn, passive.
 - Seems overly anxious when faced with new situations or people.
 - Takes on adult or parent roles and responsibilities.
 - Throws tantrums, seems impulsive, defiant, antisocial, aggressive.
 - Fearful, hyper-alert, lack of creativity and exploration.

- Sexual:
 - Has torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.
 - Experiences pain or itching in genital areas.
 - Has venereal disease.
 - Appears withdrawn or engages in fantasy or baby-like behavior.
 - Has a poor relationship with other children.
 - Is unwilling to participate with other children.
 - States that he or she has been sexually assaulted.
 - Acts like an adult, not a child.

If you suspect abuse or neglect, ask more specific questions to get information and talk with a mlkidz leadership person immediately. **Important to note...**

- Over 80% of the time, the abuser is someone known to the victim, most abuse takes place within the context of an on-going relationship, the usual offender is between the ages of 20-30 years, 20% of sex offenders begin their activity before the age of 18, and finally, child abusers often are married and have children.
- If the child is disclosing that a parent is causing the harm, DO NOT talk with the parent about this. This is where much discernment needs to take place and the situation needs to be handled very carefully. Talking with the parent could lead to additional abuse, shaming, etc. Contact mlkidz leadership team to discuss immediately.

Loving Children Who Have Been Abused or Neglected:

What do I do if a child touches me inappropriately?

- Remain calm (Ask yourself if this was accidental or purposeful)
- Think about how you would respond before this occurs
- Redirect appropriately (i.e. Sarah, please keep your hands to yourself)
- Take aside at a good time and explain good touch/bad touch if given opportunity (“We do not touch areas covered by a swimming suit”). Take into account the age group you are working with (you should be able to talk about inappropriate touching with children age 3 and older).
- For abused children inappropriate touching may seem “normal.” Or, the behavior may be to gain attention or see how the adult will respond.
- Notify mlkidz leadership about purposeful and inappropriate touching.

How can I best minister to a child that has been abused or neglected?

You are an important part of the healing process to a child who may have been abused or neglected. It is imperative that you...

- Pray for the children you are working with that they will be safe, secure, and loved.
- Speak to children with integrity. Children will often “feel safe” in a church setting and may open up to you because they think you are someone who they can trust. If a child says that they want to tell you something only if you promise not to tell anyone else, you can respond, “I want to hear what you have to say but I can’t promise that I can keep a secret.” This way, if they disclose any abuse or neglect you can report without betraying their trust.
- Remember that children don’t always tell the truth but it is our responsibility to listen and report

what was stated. You may end up saving the life of a child!

- If any child has been abused and we DO know about it and action IS being taken, there are a few things to remember when working with this child (The information that follows was taken from Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in your Church by Richard Hammer):
 - Have lots of patience and understanding.
 - Report to the parents/guardians each time the child brings up the assault.
 - Show lots of love and care for the child.

SPECIAL NEEDS FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE:

When a child is in foster care their legal guardian is sometimes the CHFS (Cabinet for Health and Family Services) so often the biological family or the foster family does not have any decision making rights over the child if he or she is committed to a foster care facility. Other times the foster family has legal guardianship and has decision making rights. This includes visitation rights of biological family, who can have contact with the child, etc.

When a child is in foster care, there is often a need for added privacy. No photos should be taken of these children. Names not talked about outside of church. Moreover, staff and volunteers should not solicit information about whether foster parents plan to adopt, why the children are in care, or where their birth parents live.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN:

First Aid:

Although we strive to maintain the safest environment possible, it is known that the nature of children's activities occasionally leads to accidents. A first-aid kit equipped with disposable latex gloves, gauze pads, adhesive bandages, adhesive tape, scissors, syrup of ipecac, measuring spoons, a disposable mouth shield for use in CPR and ice packs will be kept stocked in classrooms or in the mlkidz bathroom and will be accessible per the discretion of the mlkidz leadership team.

It is the policy of mlkidz to first notify the child's parents in the event of a medical incident. In the event that the parents are not immediately available, childcare volunteers will administer appropriate treatment measures such as applying pressure or a bandage to a bleeding wound. No pharmacological treatment, oral or topical, will be administered. Life-threatening situations will, of course, be handled as emergencies with appropriate treatment measures being immediately instituted. 911 and parents will be notified immediately. Matthias Lot will not be responsible for any "Good Samaritan" assistance offered by any of its members.

Fire:

In the event of a fire, personnel have been trained to remain calm, count all children in room and lead the children out of the room in an organized, quick fashion. Children will be evacuated to Union Building parking lot.

Specific Instructions for Teachers:

- Nursery (Infants 0-24 months):
 - The lead teacher will direct the evacuation of the infants.
 - The lead teacher will count the number of infants before leaving the room.
 - Fire escape plans have been posted in each classroom.
 - The last volunteer will close the door behind them as they leave the classroom as a sign that all kids are out.
 - The lead teacher will double-check, making sure he or she has all of the children they counted.
 - Parents will meet their infant at the designated location.

- Children (2-10 years old)
 - The lead teacher will direct the evacuation of the children in their classroom.
 - The lead teacher will count the number of children before leaving the room.
 - The lead teacher will direct other volunteers to get the children to exit the building.
 - The last teacher or volunteer will close the door.
 - Fire escape plans have been posted in each classroom.

Power Outage:

Flashlights are readily available to all classrooms (in their storage closet). If a power outage were to occur, children will be entertained and kept secure until their parents arrive. Normal security procedures would be followed.

Tornadoes, Storms, Severe Weather:

Children will be calmly escorted to an enclosed part of the building, such as an inside hallway or the lowest section of the building. They will be taught how to sit with their back against the wall, knees tucked under their chins, arms wrapped around the knees, and heads bent down. All children will be accounted for and efforts will be made to calm and entertain the children. Drills for these situations will be done regularly to train the children in these situations.

* Entire document has been adapted from Sojourner Community Church, Louisville, KY