



Ways to Make Kids Feel Special and Loved...

1. Learn Their Names....

The best way to make someone feel unimportant is to be continually asking them their name. Your name was easy to their, there is only one of you. But kids don't always realize that there are many kids for you to learn. And if they DO realize, then your remembering only means that much more. If you have a lot of kids in your ministry, use name tags! I use a separate color for visitors so that I can call them by name during our program. You can even make flash cards to work on learning names either by having kids fill out a prayer card on themselves (complete with picture!) or take pictures and make yourself flash cards to work on learning kids name while in your car or when you pray for them!

2. Drop Them Fun Stuff in the Mail....

We adults are inundated with mail... bills, flyers, coupon packets, pre-approved credit card applications, form letters, notices that we have won millions and an occasional personal note from a friend. Mail is an everyday event for us, in fact, we are shocked if don't we get any mail! Which is why many can overlook the impact of mail to kids.

Children almost NEVER get mail, so when they do get something, especially with THEIR name on it - it is EXCITING!! Learn to use mail to touch the kids in your ministry.... and I don't mean just sending out those boring post cards that were printed in the 70's and are still sold at Christian bookstores!

Here are some tips that will help 'deliver' a personal touch to your ministry to kids!

- Have your own stationary made - by hand. Mine says hello really big and has cool stick figure dudes all over it doing different things, with humorous bubble captions. Then there is a box for a personal hand written message. You can photo-copy the stationary on bright colored paper and then add a personal note. If you write with Crayola markers or colored pens, you need not write an epistle, but just a short note. It is not the length of the note that counts so much as the fact that you took the time to write a personal note!
- Collect stickers and put some on the envelope. Cute ones for girls, cool ones for boys!
- Get into rubber stamping and decorate your paper and envelopes with those. Add your own colors and bubble captions for an added personal touch.
- Enclose a small prize! A sticker, novelty prize, baseball card, etc. Perhaps even a coupon for a prize the next time they come to church!
- Enclose an activity page for them to do. I have a "Draw Pastor Karl" page I send little kids that has everything drawn already but the face. They add my face and then add details to the page. Some even return it to me to show me! (I never looked so good!)
- Enclose a CHILD'S Gospel tract if you are not sure they are saved yet!
- Send a letter to visitors, absent kids, birthday kids, and other special occasions.



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You can write to several kids every week! It only takes a little time on Monday morning to look over Sunday and see who was a visitor, who was "missing", who was out sick, etc. You can even enclose a copy of your Sunday Kid's Bulletin for the kids who were absent that I am writing to. No, you do not have to write to every kid who is gone every week, be selective. I have a system where I monitor my contact with every kid in my ministry - phone calls, mail contacts, personal visits, etc. I target the kids that have not been 'hit' in a few weeks. AND keep an eye out for those kids who are always there - they can be so good they get overlooked! So I send out a note once in awhile to the kids who have perfect attendance. I even have a 'cool kid' letter that goes out to a few kids every now and then just to let them know I think they are a cool kid! So, get organized! Get your big envelopes, your colored paper, your stickers, your rubber stamps, stamp pads, markers, prizes and get writing! You will hear the good reports not only from kids, but parents too!

3. Call Them on the Phone....

As much as kids like mail, they like phone calls too. Why do you think kids are the ones who usually answer the phone when you call families? They LOVE the phone! But usually the call is for someone else and they have to pass the call along to Mom or Dad of an older sibling. What delight when they hear you say, "I called for you."

A few tips to make your phone calls successful:

- Be sure the parents know you before you just talk to kids, for the parents comfort.
- Ask open ended questions, otherwise you'll just get "yes" and "no" answers or the dreaded, "uh huh." It sometimes helps to have an excuse to call, such as: "Missed you Sunday..." or "Just wanted to remind you of an up-coming event..." or "I'm conducting a kid survey... what did you like the best about Kid's Church Sunday?"
- THEN ask questions about what they were doing when you called? What do they like to do after school? Do they have a video game system? What is their favorite game?
- Ask for some prayer requests... TAKE NOTES, and on future calls be sure to ask about those prayer requests. That demonstrates that you really prayed!

4. Remember Their Birthday....

Birthdays are very important to kids! (They seem to be important to most grown ups I know too!) When you remember a kids birthday, they know they are special to you! Here are TWO great ways to remember kids birthdays:

BIRTHDAY PHONE CALL! Keep track of your kids' birthdays! I use the Youth Assistant Database software (www.youthassistant.com) which will print me a list by month, and I hang it on a monitor clip right next to my computer monitor in my office.



Here's some ideas:

- If you get an answering machine, have a puppet sing Happy Birthday, and then do your voice at distance coming into the room and 'catching' the puppet on your phone, talk aback and forth a little, with your puppet explaining whose birthday it is, and then you get on the phone and say Happy Birthday too.
- If you get the child on the phone, say that you called to wish them a Happy Birthday!
- Ask if they are having a party, if so, when or where?
- Ask what they hope to get (or got) for their birthday?
- Ask how old they are, share a memory from when you were that age.

BIRTHDAY PACKET IN THE MAIL! Send your kids a Birthday Packet that they will remember! Postcards or boring cards sometimes communicate 'you had to send something.' Send something that shows time and effort. Use some of the ideas from the "Send Them Stuff in the Mail Above."

Here's what I enclose in my Birthday Packets:

- A birthday card I designed myself. I design one boy and one girl card each year. Next year they will get a new one.
- A Birthday Prize Coupon for them to bring to Kid's Church for a prize!*
- A small toy or prize
- A Gospel Tract I wrote based on how they can have a Second Birthday.*
- The USS Pastor Karl Paper Airplane I designed. *
- SEAL THE ENVELOPE with a "Don't Open Till Your Birthday Sticker."**
- ***PDF SAMPLES** of these are available online linked within this article!

ANOTHER OPTION FOR SOME... Another thing I do for my kid is that I do Birthday Parties for them as much as possible. I only actually do about 2-3 a month, so I don't hit every kid. Since I can't do them all, I don't advertise that I'll do this, but whenever a kid invites me to his/her party I let the parent know that I would be happy to do a little magic show, bring some puppets, and do balloon animals for the kids. I used to do this professionally, but now it is a treat reserved only for the kids of my church. It has a great evangelistic benefit. While I rarely actually share the Gospel at a party (though occasionally a parent asks me to) the kids who come get to know me and my puppets, and that makes it that much easier for the church kid to invite them to future church events! The friends parents also meet me when they drop off and pick up their kids and the host parents introduces me as the Kid's Pastor at their church. Everybody wins! But best of all, the kid whose birthday it is!



5. Give Them Little Gifts...

You don't want to 'buy' a kids love, but little gifts are a way to the heart. I emphasize little gifts. Big gifts can create a feeling of obligation, but little gifts say, "I care."

Here are a few ideas of little gifts that have a BIG impact....

- Save those Happy Meal prizes and keep them handy to give away when you see a kid!
- Stickers bring smiles to all young kids, and girls of all ages.
- Candy is O.K. if you know the parents. You should be reinforcing the teaching of not taking candy from strangers by not giving candy to strangers! (And only give away wrapped candy.)
- Little kids like pennies, say "A penny for your thoughts, what are you thinking about right now?" And after chatting awhile, give them the penny for their thoughts!
- As you get to know kids hobbies, collections, etc. keep them in mind. I recently gave a mini Coca Cola can from overseas to a boy who likes Coke stuff.

6. Know Their World...

One of the most effective, but most subtle, ways to make a kid feel special is when they see that you know and understand their world. This means he knows what cereal they eat, what television shows they watch, what toys they play with, what popular actors/athletes they admire or whatever else is important to children. I can tell story after story of times when children were amazed at what I knew about their world - and as a result my relationship with them deepened.

Here are some ideas that can help you learn more about the World of Kids:

- **Never pass a toy store without going in!**
- **BUY SOMETHING in that toy store.**
- **Carry small toys / gadgets in your pockets.**
- **Display toys in your office, car, home, or anywhere else!**
- **Order a Kid's Meal and keep the prize for yourself.**
- **Go to kid's movies and read kid's books / comics.**
- **Men: wear some goofy ties kids will like!**
- **Women: wear some kid-friendly jewelry or scarves.**
- **Read kid's joke books and memorize a few.**
- **Play with the kids on your block, not just your own kids.**
- **Watch some Saturday morning cartoons**
- **Go down the cereal aisle and pick one that looks yummy.**
- **Check out the latest candy and buy some to give away**
- **Check out the kid's section at your Christian book store.**



7. Spend Time With Them....

O.K. You are determined to get to know kids, to get involved in their world, and are even considering buying yourself a toy. But how does an adult *relate* to child? No amount of “stuff” or understanding changes the fact that a kid is a kid and a “grown up” is not. How do you bridge that gap? How does an adult cross the chasm of differences so that children will see them not as just another “grown up” authority figure, but as a friend. Turning into a clown is not the answer, for you must still maintain your authority and respect, or you simply cannot lead. How do you learn to minister across the gap? You do this primarily by spending TIME with kids!

And I do not mean in front of them teaching! You must spend time with them being *RELATIONAL* not merely *INFORMATIONAL*! **Relationship must come first.** If you like someone you will learn from them. Whether you realize it or not! That is why “bad company corrupts good character.” (I Cor. 15:33) Strive to be a kid’s friend *before* you are his teacher! This will transform your relationships with children, your classroom, your approach to discipline, and your overall ministry effectiveness with kids! As you learn to understand children and their world, and become a genuine friend of the kids you minister to, you will influence more children than you can even imagine!

Look at the ministry of Jesus! While He did spend much time teaching, his ministry was built on a foundation of **RELATIONAL OUTREACH**. Read the Gospels and note how much time Jesus spends *with people*, walking with them, going to see them, and ministering to their needs. He did not just stand on the hillside and talk! Neither should we be content just to stand in our classrooms and teach! Here are just a few of the many ways you can spend time with kids outside of the ‘program:’

IN-HOME VISITS. Check out kids bedrooms and toys to see what interests them! Especially visit when they are home sick.

OUT-OF-HOME VISIT. Take them out for lunch or dinner. An after-school snack is a hit with kids and moms. Plan special outings to places popular with kids. (Always have the parents knowledge and permission, of course!)

CHURCH CONTACTS! (Besides your class!) Sit with them in “big church” or evening service. Talk with them in the hallways, never just walk past a kid!

8. Pray For Them...

As mentioned under phone calls ask kids for things you can pray for them about. And then (besides actually praying for them) be sure to follow up on the prayer request to see how things are going. You may be able to rejoice with them over answered prayer, continue to pray with them, or work together through the disappointment of a no answer from God. As the saying goes, The



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family that prays together stays together. There is a principle there: Praying together and for each other creates a powerful bond of unity. A child who knows you pray for them will feel special!

A few ideas for ways you can pray for the children in your ministry...

- Ask for prayer requests when you talk on the phone.
- Keep a prayer journal of kids prayer requests and answers.
- Have a Prayer Wall where kids can write out prayer requests and post them. One church told me that they had a Request Wall and an Answer Wall where the answered prayers were moved to after they had been answered!
 - Have kids make Prayer Cards on themselves, much like missionaries have.
 - Have an e-mail address where kids can send their prayer requests.
 - During the week, when the church is empty, go through your children's ministry rooms and pray for the staff that work in them and the children who study in them. Pictures on the wall will help. Set a time when others can come pray with you for the children of your church.

9. Remember Them....

When kids move away, don't forget them! Be sure to still write to them or call them and see how they are going. Arrange for classes they left to make "We miss you cards." After a year they should be re-adjusted to their new home, but in the transition time your remembering them can be a real boost! Contacting them after it is no longer 'your job' proves they are special to you .

10. Create Great Memories For Them...

Don't under estimate the impact of that extra effort you put into your ministry every week. Children know the difference between child care and when you pull out the stops because they are important to you! Those great events that aren't on Sunday let them know they are special. This winter I am having a Saturday Morning with Pastor Karl once a month that is basically just a fun relational time with the kids that has a little spiritual emphasis, but a lot of I love kids because Jesus loves kids emphasis! (YO-YO Mania, The Paper Airplane Fair, Leggo-My-Lego, etc.)

When you go on those retreats, when you stay all night at the Lock-In, when you sit around eating pretzels and drinking pop at 2 in the morning, those kids know they are special.

Why? Because YOU are special and you love kids! Keep up the great work!

Because Jesus Loves Children,

Pastor Karl D. Bastian
www.kidology.org