

How to Mentor and Make Disciples

Beware. . .this. . .t-a-k-e-s. . .t-i-m-e.

He chose them [His disciples] that He might be **WITH** them, and He might send them forth to teach.

Mark 3.14

While it is great to belong to a big bunch of kids, each of us had a space in our hearts when we were children, just the size of an adult who could lead us by the heart to get to know Jesus in a real way. In my experience, most who look for a spot to work with children had parents who showed them the way to live for Jesus. Many came to faith in their own homes, but we hoped that there would be somebody at church who would care about us, too.

For that reason, I encourage you to get to know a small knot of kids and care about them. No more than five or six kids. If you work in a larger ministry like, AWANA or Kids Bible Clubhouse, or Junior Church, or such, get as close to being the Best Adult Friend that you can be. Learn how to pray intelligently for their week or month, their friends, siblings, schoolmates, and parents. Your ministry might call them “bunches” or “clusters” or “clans” “bands” “cliques” “tribes” or “packs.”

Then pick two kids that you get along with and invest some time in their lives.

* I’d suggest you pick kids who have already shown an obvious interest in growing spiritually. They know the Lord as their Savior, pay attention in Clubhouse, memorize verses, and have invited others.

* Sometimes it’s nice if they are already friends with each other, sometimes not.

Sometimes friends are a distraction to each other. My experience is that usually any two kids can work.

* This level of discipleship is intended for the older kids in your Clubhouse—4th-6th graders.

* They will probably be the same gender as you. Women can work cross-gender more easily than men.

* I picked out two kids, Kirk, 4th grader one year, and Joyce, a 4th grader another year. I picked him or her up after school and drove to a park not far from my home. It wasn’t a busy park, but always had three or four people to explain the Gospel to, sometimes lots more. We would pray first, then we’d pass out several tracts, get into at least one or two good conversations. Pray for the kids [*or adults, sometimes teens which was scary for Joyce*] we got to witness to, and then we’d go get an ice cream cone and I’d take them home. I also worked with brothers, Benji & Tony—a 3rd and fifth grader, as well as Ricky—a seventh grader, Susan in eighth, and Bob—a misfit tenth grader.

Make a point each week to chat with them—hobbies, school, how things are going at home, share a Bible verse, tips for Bible reading, jokes [*i.e. anything*]. *see my blog on 100 Perceptive Questions*

Make sure they know that you especially care for them, but never to the exclusion of the other kids.

In my teaching Junior Church I bring along kids who used to be my students and are now in 8th grade or above. I ask them to teach verses, lead songs, take charge of crowd-control, sit beside the easily-distracted kids, erase the boards afterwards, take kids photos, explain salvation during group times, holler for the kids to come inside when class starts, teach mini-lessons if they’d like, give quizzes, help with reviewing previous lessons, use the puppets for the missionary story, tap the fidgety kids on the shoulder,

and do anything I can think of to help with the smooth running of the class of 25 urchins ages 6-11. Most of the time these kids are in junior high themselves. I'm hoping I'm preparing them to take leadership roles when they get to high school.

Pray for them the most. You might use the HEDGE to learn to pray for them 300 different ways. Put a card with their names in your wallet or on your desk or mirror.

see my blog, The HEDGE

Birthday cards, Christmas cards, a phone call once a month, a visit to the home to meet their parents and siblings, drop off a tiny birthday gift, ask if they could join you when you take your family to the county fair. You get the idea.

Help them learn to mark special verses in their Bibles.

It's not going to be as intense as Jesus' time was with His disciples. But go out of your way to speak often to these 2 or 3 about spiritual things that are happening in your life. It isn't about goals you are setting for them, but about taking opportunities to infect their lives with your passion for Jesus and reaching the world.

Teach them to enjoy telling other kids about Jesus. When you are dealing one-on-one with kids after Clubhouse, call them over just to listen.

While teaching 5th & 6th grades at a Christian school, 4 girls and I formed a group with the very creative name, "The 56 Club."

Each Wednesday afternoon we took a small fistful of tracts and went out into the "woods." It was 20 acres of scrub and skinny little trees. It was the hangout for lots of kids in the neighborhood and we'd sit down in a shady spot and talk about Bible verses to use when witnessing. Their parents came later that day to pick them up.

I'd talk and they'd ask questions for about 25 minutes. I showed them how to mark salvation verses in their Bibles, what questions to ask kids, and what not to say. Then we'd go find some kids to witness to. We always found a kid walking by himself, or maybe a brother and sister, or some kid flying through the woods on his bike.

For the girls, the greatest day came when about 8 rambunctious kids came by and joined us under this tree which almost hid us from sight. Everybody was about 4th grade to 6th grade. Randy was somebody's little 4 year-old brother, and really didn't feel like listening to me, so the girls took him "outside" to another secret spot. As I recall, all seven of the kids put their trust in Jesus that day and just when we were finishing up, the girls came back with Randy.

The girls beamed and pushed Randy toward me. They said, "Go ahead and tell him what you just did." I kneeled down and in a soft voice Randy told me he had just believed in Jesus.

Thanks, Carrie, Pam, Jennifer, and Debbie. You made my day!

Tell them that you'd like them to become Clubhouse helpers when they get into junior high.

Find out their favorite verse in the Bible and write their names on that page in your Bible.

Take their pictures and put them on your dartboard.

I've showed up a 7th grade football practice at 7am—in the dark.

I've gone to dance recitals, piano recitals, football and soccer games, swim practices, camping trips, leaf-raking parties, cleaned up parks with a crowd of rowdy [*very rich, some resistant*] teens, cleaned up debris at city intersections, painted poor church-members homes, taken kids to downtown rescue missions [*very scary for some*], baseball games, had impromptu tug-o-war in the middle of a cul-de-sac, scrubbed widows' filthy-crusty-vile kitchen floors, laundered drapes, fixed bicycles in a rundown section of town with volunteer teens, washed old cars, taken out trash, and on, and on. This is called hands-on mentoring. It is a wonderful lesson in putting flesh on Christianity. Some kids open up while holding a scraper or cleaning rag who will never share a secret with an adult inside the church house.

I don't recommend that you play "Uncle" with 3 junior high boys. The object of the game is to put so much hurt on them [*while they create pain upon you*] that they scream "Uncle!" at which time you have to let them go free so they can run across the room, tag the wall, and return leaping on you attempting to twist your own arm around your

neck. Your only reprieve [*adults aren't allowed to say "Uncle"*] is to tag the only other stupid youth worker male who then takes your place in this fricassee [*nice that Bruce was 6'8"*].

The only way you can win is to get all 3 boys to say "Uncle" and be running toward the wall AT THE SAME TIME. It only took one hour. Adults won!

Drop by the house to see his model airplane collection, new skateboard, favorite books, trampoline, or new hockey stick. Does he have posters in his bedroom: *are his/her heroes musicians, athletes, animals, Christians, travel posters, famous inventors, missionaries, or Hollywood stars?*

I stopped by 7th grade Michelle's house [*not her real name*]. She had missed Sunday School yesterday and so I dropped by [*each Monday at the home of every girl who missed*] to drop off her "homework" Bible study. Mom said she was in her room. Well, I don't go into 7th grade girl's rooms but I stood at the end of the hall and hollered, "Michelle!"

The door right next to me flung open immediately and Michelle said "Hi Doc!"

I did peek past her into her room. There was a 7th grade boy in there.

I learned something that day. I learned that Mom had rocks in her head.

Have you ever argued theology in the bedroom of a kid in your college Sunday School class until one am in the morning with 4 others guys from your college class? Or driven through the night with a student while trying to quote every verse in the Bible book by book? Or just sang hymns softly while the guys in the back seat were sleeping? And have you prayed every hour-on-the-hour on a 12-hour trip for those who need Jesus?

Find out as much as you can about things that are important to them: hobbies, friends, likes & dislikes, favorite [*and not so favorite*] school subjects, dreams, what-they-want-to-be-when-they-grow-up, difficult things, favorite TV shows & DVDs, favorite entertainers, favorite books of the Bible, or characters in the Bible, favorite color and ice cream, vacation, and on, and on, and on.

Don't try to do all this at once, but keep at it for many, many months.

Teach them the "5 SPIRITUAL MUSCLE EXERCISES"

a crash course in holy Christian living

Kids will never become strong Christians unless they start doing lots of good works.

Ephesians 2.10 "unto good works."

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| EYES, <i>Bible</i> | Get them started reading the Gospel of John
<i>[give out Gospels of John freely, and a red pen for circling the words "believe" [98x]</i> |
| EARS, <i>Church</i> | Tell them to go to a church that uses the Bible in Sunday School.
You have a responsibility to steer every new believer to church. |
| MOUTH, <i>Witness</i> | Give new kids 5 "Kids' Heaven Tests" before they leave club |
| KNEES, <i>Pray</i> | They need to know 4 ways to pray:
#1 say "I love you, God" each time
#2 tell God about your friends who don't know Jesus,
#3 apologize to God when you do something wrong
#4 ask God to send missionaries around the world |
| HANDS | <i>Do lots of nice things for other people</i> |