

What About Childcare?



One of the most common questions (and sometimes struggles) faced by small groups is what to do about children. Although some groups are made up of people who no longer have children in the home, many of our groups are blessed with children of all ages. What level of involvement should the children have in the life of the group?

Answering that question involves a trade-off. Perhaps we wish it were not so, but the reality for most groups is that adults will not be as transparent in discussion and prayer if children are present. We tend to want to protect our children from our struggles, needs, doubts, etc. At the same time, involvement in the life of a group provides a wonderful opportunity for the spiritual formation of our children. It seems a shame to miss such an opportunity for involvement in the lives of younger generations.

So what's the solution? As with many areas of life, there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer. But there are options, hopefully one of which will work well for your group.

On one end of the spectrum, older children or a hired baby sitter would supervise the children in play in another area while the adults meet, then perhaps be together for a meal or refreshments. The adults are able to have a more private time for their discussion, but also can interact with the children during the common time.

Groups on the other end of the spectrum would include the children in all discussion and activities. Although the discussion or study may not have the depth of other groups, the children are blessed through their involvement. Obviously, the younger the children are the more challenging this option will be.

Some groups have found a good middle ground; including the children during a portion of the group time—perhaps singing or having a brief devotional with them—then dismissing the children to another area while the adults have their time. Some groups just let the children play, others have a Bible lesson for them. During the school year, Todd Miller will help groups by providing curriculum for the children, as well as a list of Harding students who can be contacted about leading the children during this time. (It is recommended that the students be paid the appropriate baby sitting fees.) Contact Todd at 268-5383 or at tmiller@downtownchurch.org for such help.

Whichever option you choose, it is important that you have a mutual understanding of how childcare will be handled early in the formation of your group. Once an option is agreed upon, try it for a few weeks, then evaluate.

