

How to Train Your Children to Prophecy in the Spirit

Kids today are starved for supernatural reality. They are not just open to spiritual power; they long for it!

The church is faced with a media-savvy generation raised on action-packed superhero blockbusters. Kids have energy to burn, and they are looking for action—for something to do. They hunger for a sense of adventure and meaning in life.

Unfortunately, our response often is to fill our programs with games and activities that stave off boredom but rob them of real encounters with the living God.

I know that God is willing to use our kids to show His awesome power, to prophecy, to pray for and receive healing, to hear His voice and to share His gospel. And I know that most Christian parents and children's ministry leaders agree with me.

We believe in miracles—and we want our children to expect God to perform them. But if we're honest, most of us feel fairly powerless at knowing how to introduce supernatural living to our kids.

It is for this reason that we started publishing children's Sunday school curriculum 12 years ago. We wanted to provide churches with the tools they need to help children experience the power of God.

Though the lion's share of responsibility to train our kids in the way they should go rests squarely on the shoulders of parents (see Prov. 6:22), more and more Christians are recognizing the strategic role churches play in providing Holy Spirit-led training to release children into their divine destinies.

But how do we introduce children to the life of the Spirit in a way they can relate to, a way that's compelling, without trying so hard to be relevant that we water down the gospel? In church, how do we help children develop a living faith that expects God to move instead of simply entertain them?

Most children's church programs put the emphasis on imparting information to children—educating them with Bible facts. But kids want to know that the stuff they are taught in church really works.

We've learned that children must be taught spiritual truth in an engaging and fun way. They must be given opportunities to encounter God for themselves, both in the classroom and at home.

Karen Stefacek, a project manager with The Next Generation, shares that it's common for kids in her children's ministry to hear the Holy Spirit speaking with them.

"We regularly take time during praise and worship to quietly wait for God to speak to our hearts," she explains. "On one occasion, a young girl named Halia came up to the platform. After whispering her message in my ear, she shared with everyone that God had told her we didn't need to be afraid because He was always with us. You could see the response in the eyes of others—her 'word' had clearly touched young hearts in a personal way."

Unquestionably, churches today must step up to the plate and provide innovative and anointed ministry for children. Here are some key principles I've learned both as a father of three sons and as a children's ministry director at two churches.

Raise your expectation level. Have you fallen into the trap of not really expecting God to work through or use your kids—or you? As a children's ministry leader, I can easily become so focused on teaching kids about all "the good stuff" we read about in the Bible that I forget He might still want to do

those things today.

Let's ask the Holy Spirit to renew our expectation that God can and will flow through our children in power. Let's create opportunities for them to ask and expect God to show up in a big way.

In my organization's curricula, we build in specific ministry time for kids to encounter God in real and personal ways. Too often our days and our church programs are so filled with activities that we don't allow for the Holy Spirit to speak clearly to our children's hearts. But we need to use programs that encourage kids to believe God will do awesome deeds.

During a kid's camp in Redding, Pennsylvania, a 7-year-old girl with a scratchy voice came up to Tim Carpenter and asked for prayer. Instead of praying for her himself, Tim asked a few of the other kids to lay hands on her in the name of Jesus.

"There was no apparent change on the outside to her scratchy voice, which I had assumed was a cold," Tim says. "But the next day, the girl's grandmother came running up to me with tears in her eyes. Turns out, it wasn't a cold. The girl had a growth in her throat and doctors had accidentally slit her esophagus, damaging her voice permanently. When the little girl woke up the next morning after prayer, she could speak perfectly!"

Let's teach kids that signs and wonders are a normal and expected part of living as a believer.

Allow kids to minister. This idea flows from the first. If we expect God to use our kids, then we need to put them in situations in which they can be used. {eo}

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about training your children to walk in the spiritual gifts.