

Cross of Grace Church

Community Groups & Childcare Info Sheet

Updated September 1, 2016

What's the best way to handle kids and community group? This is a question every group must answer for itself but here are a few guidelines to keep in mind.

Kids and Community Groups: The Benefit

Sometimes kids learn biblical concepts through specific age-appropriate instruction, other times they observe how these concepts are worked out. Seeing their parents live out the values of Jesus, Family, and Mission week to week in community group can help communicate these values even to young kids. This is why we encourage, when possible, to groups to find some meaningful connection between the kids in the group and the group itself. This will vary greatly from group to group but should start with a conviction that kids are not simply an interruption, but a blessing. However, this must also be balanced against having a reasonable ability in the group to focus on the task at hand. We encourage groups to bring up, discuss, and decide this issue at least yearly and to look to their group coach for help when necessary.

Kids and Community Groups: The Responsibility

We must make clear though that the church itself cannot coordinate childcare across groups because of the difficulty of implementing consistent policies in a uniform way. Ultimately, parents must decide what is best for their family and make sure childcare arrangements are handled in a satisfactory way and that they feel comfortable and safe.

Kids and Community Groups: The Practicals

Here are several options to consider in the regular meeting:

- *Parents Provide Own Childcare:* Some groups may opt to have each member individually arrange for childcare on group meeting nights. This may be necessary depending on where the group meets and whether it can safely accommodate children.
- *Full Group Involvement:* Groups may allow kids to be part of as much of the group as possible, and take this into account when structuring the meeting. This may mean a longer family/community time and a shorter study, etc.
- *Partial Group Involvement:* Groups may intentionally involve kids in part of the meeting (meal, or worship, etc.) but not the rest of the meeting.
- *Group Provides Childcare:* The group may opt to rotate parents or group members that can provide childcare during the meetings. Or perhaps the fathers watch the kids one meeting and the moms watch the kids the next meeting. Or some other arrangement.
- *Parents Partner for Childcare:* Some parents may choose to work together to arrange for childcare, such as hiring babysitters for the group children.
- *Benevolence Need:* In some cases it will be impossible for the group to provide childcare for one reason or another. After working through the above options if there is still a need

please contact your community group coach to see if benevolence funds may be appropriate to pay for childcare for a season for a particular family.

As noted above, since parents have the responsibility to care for their children any childcare options should be optional and agreed to by participating parents in the group. We encourage good principles for child protection to be followed and refer people to our manual on child protection.

Kids and Community Groups: Outside the Group Mtg

Every group is encouraged to pursue aspects of relationship-building and mission beyond the group and this can be another great place to consider involving kids. Could a cookout be held at a place kids can run and play? Could a prayer walk include some kids in strollers?

Kids and Community Groups: Two Sample Groups

What can this look like? Here are two sample group formats from Cross of Grace groups.

Young Kids & Full Involvement: In a group with lots of kids under the age of 5 one group determined to do a meal each time and to involve the kids fully in the meal. They also shared life updates and prayer requests over the meal. Then they stole away for about 20-30 minutes of Bible study—sometimes with the dads or moms rotating in watching the kids.

Older Kids & Playroom: In a group with older kids that could play independently one group allowed kids to play outside and in an adjoining group where the kids were within easy earshot and view of the parents in the meeting. Often one or more parents were assigned to stand in the back and check regularly on the kids and get the appropriate parents when necessary.