

7 Terrific Ideas for Family Ministry

We asked children's ministry and family ministry leaders for their #1 idea to minister to families. You won't believe how easy some of these are!



There are many facets to family ministry-whether your church is embarking on a churchwide initiative, you're celebrating kids' faith milestones, or you're simply looking for small ways to incorporate families into what your ministry is already doing. We asked children's ministers for their best, most effective idea or insight for family ministry-and now we've compiled a potpourri of fantastic family ideas for you.

Family Worship Sunday In the months that have five Sundays, the fifth Sunday is Family Worship Sunday. On that day, our senior pastor and I co-lead the sermon. I bring props, object lessons, and visuals, and we have kids sit up front. The pastor and I work together to create a service that's interesting and engaging for adults and the kids. We incorporate some of our typical children's ministry experiences and have everyone participate.

These special Sundays have been very effective at giving parents and other adults in the church a glimpse into what goes on in children's ministry. We've been able to increase our volunteer pool, see families get more involved at church and at home, and keep children's ministry in front of our congregation. One of the greatest things about Family Worship Sunday is our entire church sees how our pastor is onboard with children's ministry by opening the sanctuary for us to worship and learn together.

Volunteer Connections Keeping in touch with families on a regular basis has been a key goal of our family ministry efforts. One of the best things we've done is have all our volunteers [make a connection with families](#). We simply split our ministry kids among our children's ministry volunteer base. Each volunteer has about 10 kids. Volunteers make contact with the child's family every week. How they do it is up to the volunteers-they might send a card, pay a visit, make a phone call, or send an email. We just want families to know they're important to us, they have many friends here, and our ministry cares.

Family Fridge Frame One great idea we've used with families is really simple but effective: Fridge Frames. Kids decorate a simple 5x7 cardboard picture frame (available at craft stores) for their families and then attach a magnet to the back.

We let kids and parents know they can stick the Fridge Frame where the entire family can see it on the refrigerator. Each week we send home a new 5x7 card with the week's verse or Bible point we're studying printed on it. We encourage families to simply read the verse together at breakfast or dinner. This simple

practice has been really effective at sparking faith discussions in families and helping kids and their parents see how God's Word applies to life today.

Creative Coffee Chatter Several years ago our church created a space for people to buy coffee and bagels. A great side effect of this mini Starbucks-like atmosphere has been that the small coffee nook creates significant opportunity for connections.

You don't have to build a mock-Starbucks to pull this off. Consider sprucing up your current coffee nook or repurposing your current coffee cart with intentionality. It's as easy as creating opportunities for you to sit with parents over coffee and have conversation around the start or end of a service time. Parents know that I'll be around for coffee before and after our children's programming. Here's the short list of topics I rely on, sometimes planned, sometimes off-the-cuff.

- **Get Acquainted** We serve many parents who we really don't know. Engage in simple conversation to get to know them better, with no agenda except finding out more about who they are as individuals. When you know more about parents, you'll be able to serve them and their kids better.
- **Get "Fresh Eyes"** Parents can give you valuable insight, observations, and opinions about what they see and feel in your ministry-and will be more willing to do so over a cup of coffee. Ask for their views and really listen, and you'll find they're empowered to share ideas often. It's guaranteed you'll get ideas to fine tune your ministry.
- **Give Support** Use these coffee moments to offer ideas and resources for parents. Help parents learn about being spiritual leaders or ways to parent from a Christian perspective.
- **Give Ministry Updates** Inform parents of upcoming events and dates in your ministry. Let them know how your summer camp fundraising is going. Talk about what kids are doing now. This casual update is a great way to keep parents in the loop and invite their thoughts on what your ministry is doing and where it's headed.
- **Give Recruiting a Chance** I saved this for last. Rather than going in with a list of positions you need filled, continually keep the mindset that in the course of these coffee conversations, you may uncover an interest in serving or a hidden talent. I've found that this is often an unexpected bonus of investing a few minutes of friendly conversation with parents.

No-Miss [Family Experiences](#) When you talk to families today, they all describe their lives as busy, busy, busy. So adding more to their already-crazed schedules usually leads to low attendance for events.

We struggled with this in our church, and eventually decided to try the idea of scheduling our family events during regular children's programming rather than during additional times. For these once-per-month or once-per-quarter special experiences, we combined classes to form one large group and invited families. We've done a range of things, including guiding families through a learning experience of multiple touch-points such as a Bible story experience, a family prayer space, a guest speaker or artist, crafts and activities, and of course, snacks.

This approach has let us create several big "wow" experiences on a Sunday morning when families have already set aside this time to be together at church.

There have been several other benefits, too. Families love these special Sundays, they invite their friends, and our ministry team is energized (rather than drained) by the change of pace. Last-and best of all-families actually come to the events we work so hard to pull off.

All-Inclusive Date Night One of our ministry's most successful and impactful family ministry ideas is so simple: date nights. We do the typical father/daughter and mother/son date nights, but here's the twist: We invite all ages. The point is, we want younger kids and families to see examples of older generations who love God and love fun. I can't even begin to express what a blessing it is to see a 65-year-old woman bring her 85-

year-old father to a date night. It sets an incredible example to the younger dads and their daughters. We provide simple appetizers and a brief devotion, and then send everyone out on their own dates while providing free childcare for parents with little ones left behind. The cost is very low for our ministry, but the outcome is amazing.

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