

As I think back over what children's ministry has looked like for Neely's Creek in this year of 2020, I realize how much of what we have done is in new territory for us all. For the first time, we have had Sunday school at home as children have joined Zoom meetings or watched recorded lessons and done activities from a packet that was delivered to them. We have all longed for our old and more comfortable ways. If you are like me, you have thought, more than once, how much easier it would be if we could just do what we have always done.

I believe that through these challenges, God has been refining us. We have had time to reflect on what we were doing, how well (or not) it was working, and what is most essential for our ministries and church moving forward. What I know is that our children, more than ever before, need the firm foundation of God's truth. They need to hear and engage with His word in a way that directly impacts the circumstances of their lives. They need to see adults living out their faith, as imperfect as that will be. These are the times that we sow into young lives for the day of spiritual harvest.

As a Director of Children's Ministry, there have been many times, in this pandemic, that I felt like I couldn't do enough for our children and their spiritual development. God, kindly, reminded me that He does the work of spiritual transformation, as we faithfully help our children to feed on His Word. As parents, during this time, JP and I were able to more fully explore our role as the ones primarily responsible for the discipleship of our child. That challenged us to build more habits at home that help to draw our family closer to the Lord each day. It also made us all the more appreciative for the other adults that give of their time, energy, and wisdom to support our family in raising children in the knowledge of God's truth.

So as we look toward reopening our children's ministry, there are many things to consider, protocols to put in place, and ways to prepare. Please be assured that while we are giving time and effort to those things, we most want to see our children once again engaging in God's Word and worship together. Parents, be challenged that even as we are returning to others teaching our kids a bit more, their greatest teachers are you! Be encouraged that you don't walk that road alone. Volunteers, be challenged that you are needed now, more than ever. This is the time to pour yourself out in the work of the Lord, helping to lay the spiritual foundations for the children in our church family and beyond. Be encouraged that your work is not in vain.

With all that has been stripped away in the last few months, I pray we have been given eyes to see what is truly essential. We know that God's Word will stand, and it is sure. I hope that we have a renewed enthusiasm and urgency to share the Gospel, starting with our newest arrivals in the nursery up to our longest standing members. As a family, may we "spur one another on to love and good deeds." There is no better time to join in this Kingdom work. The opportunities abound to plant seeds in young hearts and help grow them to maturity for the glory of God in these days!

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope and overflow with confidence in His promises." Romans 15:13*