WHO WILL SPEAK UP FOR CHILDREN’S MINISTRY?

If you were sitting in a room with children’s ministry leaders, it wouldn’t take very long for the conversation to drift to the topic of budget, or the lack thereof. Many children’s ministries share this common struggle. At the same time, almost every church leader is quick to profess that they value children, and to wholeheartedly declare that the children are the future of our church.

If this is the case, why does it seem so difficult to get the resources we need to accomplish our mission? Allow me to present this scenario:

A mom (let’s call her Stacy) who just happens to be a “rock star” volunteer has been asked to coordinate the children’s ministry, because there is no one else to do it. With a passion for kids, a love for Jesus, and a box of Goldfish crackers, Stacy enters the world of ministry. Juggling supply lists, volunteer emails, curriculum decisions, and multiple meetings, she takes on each day with heartfelt determination to make this experience great for the kids in her church. As a high-capacity mom, she is used to shouldering a heavy load of varied responsibilities for her family and doing the same thing in her volunteer or employment roles, all the while wearing the label of Frugal Francis. She approaches her ministry in much the same way: working very hard and rarely asking for help, especially when it comes to money.

Unfortunately, Stacy doesn’t know that she needs to be the cheerleader, the coach and the champion for what she is doing. She can’t just be a Lone Ranger. Shouldering the load alone and quietly is not going to move the ministry forward. The mission that Stacy has taken on is going to require lots of teamwork and even more communication.

Once Stacy begins to learn that it is her place to speak up for the ministry, people will begin to look to her for direction regarding the needs of the children’s ministry. When there is funding available, and she has been “singing her song” that the kids’ area needs new furniture, she will most likely get those needs met. On the other hand, if she stays quiet and holds her requests, funding will be snatched up by the greatest perceived need. As the champion for the children, it is up to Stacy to communicate the needs and challenges to the correct staff members and committees. It is up to her to assert the importance of the children’s department, rather than waiting for people to “figure it out.” And of course, this strength must be demonstrated with a spirit of humble gratitude and genuine graciousness!

Oftentimes, the children’s ministry is simply “out of sight and out of mind” for the congregation at large. What I mean by this is that unless you are a parent or a children’s ministry volunteer, it is quite unlikely that you will ever have to walk past any children’s ministry classrooms, or even hear about what is going on in the children’s area.

YOU ARE THE CHILDREN’S MINISTRY CHAMPION

You are the leader of the children’s ministry. No one else knows that the children’s department is “the most important ministry in the church.” You have to be the one to sing that song, because no one else will, and if you don’t, how will you get the support you need to run a sustainable children’s ministry? As a director in a large children’s ministry, I found myself as the sole champion for the children’s ministry, and rightly so. Why wasn’t the youth minister my champion? Why not the minister of music? Didn’t they have young kids? They have their own causes to champion.

Now, our staff was all very supportive of each other, but I found myself in many staff meetings saying (with a little bit of a giggle, though I was being serious), “You know, the children’s ministry IS the most important ministry in the church.” No one was ever going to say that for me. Whether or not anyone in those meetings agreed with me, they all heard it, and they knew that I was willing to fight for the vision of the children’s ministry and to make sure those kids grew to love Jesus. In fact, the senior pastor would frequently say to me, “Annette, I wouldn’t want a children’s ministry director who believed any other way.” And whenever I needed something for the kids, I was pretty likely to get it.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO CHAMPION CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

Here are a couple of practical things you can do to “champion” the children’s ministry in your church.

1. Come into each meeting with a story of what God is doing in the children’s ministry.
2. Send weekly updates to your pastor detailing the successes of the previous weekend and upcoming events. (Also, if something went wrong, make sure you’re the first one to tell your pastor about it. Pastors don’t like to be surprised with angry parents!)
3. Be sure to communicate regularly with other church staff. A monthly email is a great way to make sure that your fellow church staff members know what is going well and what is coming up.