



Valuing Children in Life Groups

A common excuse for not being able to attend or host a life group is, "I don't know what to do with my children." This particular issue, although it requires a little bit of thought, should not be used as an excuse to disengage from community.

Children are a blessing from God, not a deal-breaker for your own spiritual formation. At first, the childcare issue can look like an obstacle to being involved in groups. However, like many dynamics in our life, it is another key opportunity for us to ask ourselves, "Do we really believe we need to be plugged into biblical community?" If the answer is a resounding, "yes," (and I hope that it is) then our attention and energy shifts away from waiving the white flag toward focusing on practical solutions.

Here are some ideas:

1. Include them in the beginning of the meeting.

Affirm children's place in the group by involving them at the beginning of the meeting, in the mealtime or even opening icebreaker questions. The more you can make them feel a part of the group, the more they will value it too.

2. Offer an activity in another area of the home for the children.

The resources available in the home of the meeting will determine which activities you can offer. If the home is able to have a room with toys for the kids to play with that can be a fun option. You can also offer an appropriate movie for a part of your meeting time.

3. Rotate supervision of the children each week.

Instead of putting the burden of supervision on one adult or on the spouse of the group host, organize a rotation schedule among the members of the group. Volunteering to watch the children during the group meeting is a digestible service for a person to commit to as part of the spiritual community.

4. Arrange for babysitting as a group.

If there are a handful of families in the group with children, everyone could chip in resources to provide for a babysitter. Dividing the cost is much easier than paying it alone. We can provide a list of teenage childcare volunteers that are approved to work in our Children's ministry, if you need some referrals. There are also funds available through our Life Groups department to help cover some of the cost of a babysitter upon request. Some families may prefer to arrange for their own babysitter.

Adapted from Andrew Mason's Article, "11 Ways to Value Children and Small Groups," May 11, 2017.