

Pillars of Children's Ministry Grace Church at Willow Valley

When building a sturdy structure, pillars and load-bearing walls provide the support that holds everything together. In the same way, these biblical commitments support and shape our Children's Ministry at Grace Church at Willow Valley.

Evangelistic and Gospel-Centered

We recognize that the largest population of unbelievers within our church is often the children among us. Whether or not their parents profess faith in Christ, church-going children are not automatically converted children.

For that reason, we prioritize the clear proclamation of the gospel. We teach that a Christian is someone who has been born again by the Holy Spirit, repents of sin, trusts in Christ alone as Lord and Savior for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and seeks to live out discipleship with Jesus in joyful obedience to his Word.

Bible Teaching and Scripture Memorization

Our greatest responsibility is to faithfully teach God's Word to grow their discipleship in Jesus. We desire that every child who grows up in our ministry gains a basic understanding of the Bible's overarching storyline and the fundamental truths of the gospel by the time they reach sixth grade.

Along with biblical instruction, we seek to hide God's Word in children's hearts through regular Scripture memorization.

Family Discipleship

We believe God has entrusted parents with the primary responsibility of discipling their children. The church is not called to replace parents but to come alongside them in that work.

We seek to equip families through sound biblical teaching, practical resources, and encouragement from our pastors and elders so that discipleship continues throughout the week in the home.

Hospitality

Scripture calls believers to "show hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9). We seek to reflect that hospitality by providing a welcoming, joyful, and safe environment where children are loved and cared for.

Along with faithful biblical teaching, we use age-appropriate games, music, crafts, and snacks to help children enjoy being part of the life of the church. We take the Bible seriously, and we also believe that learning about Christ should be filled with joy.

Ministry Convictions

Flowing from these pillars are several ministry convictions that our elders hold. While we recognize faithful churches may practice differently in these areas, we believe these convictions provide wise and biblical guidance for discipling children at Grace Church.

We call children to repent of sin and trust in Jesus Christ rather than rely on a formulaic prayer for salvation.

We want to use the language of Scripture when explaining the gospel. Rather, than emphasizing phrases such as "accept Jesus into your heart" or "give your life to the Lord," we teach children to repent of their sins and trust in Christ alone for salvation.

Likewise, we avoid manipulative methods of producing professions of faith. Instead, we seek to present the gospel clearly, trust the Holy Spirit to work in children's hearts, and partner closely with parents whenever a child expresses spiritual interest.

We view a child's profession of faith in Christ as the starting point, not the ultimate goal, of a child's spiritual growth.

Our mission with children is the same as our mission as a church: *to see the lost saved and the saved transformed by the gospel*. Therefore, we do not view a child's profession of faith as the ultimate "win" in our Children's Ministry, but the starting point of a lifetime of ongoing spiritual transformation into Christlikeness.

We encourage children to participate in as much of the corporate worship service as they can understand without becoming a distraction.

Children benefit from worshiping alongside the entire church family by singing, praying, hearing Scripture read, and observing the ordinances. While our sermons are intentionally aimed at adults, we gladly support parents who choose to keep their children in the worship service.

At the same time, we offer Kids Worship during the sermon so children can receive biblical instruction appropriate to their level of understanding (Nehemiah 8:2). Our long-term goal is to prepare every child to participate meaningfully in the gathered worship of the church.