



PARENT HANDBOOK

HEY THERE!

We know being a parent is one of the hardest jobs on the planet, but it's also the greatest thing you will ever do.

We know your job isn't always easy, but here's what we want you to know: we're here to help in any way we can. We may be a children's ministry, but that doesn't mean kids are the only people we care about. We care about you too!

No matter how connected (or not connected) you are with our church, this Parent Handbook will show you some of the ways we're trying to care for your kid and serve you at the same time.

Thanks for letting us be another voice in the life of your child. Your trust and partnership mean a lot to us.

We can't wait to see what this year has in store!

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Our Ministry

OUR ENVIRONMENTS

There are different kinds of environments for kids in our ministry. Each one is designed to strategically invite kids and families on a journey into deeper relationships with their peers, our adult leaders, and Jesus — and each one is designed with every kid in mind, from the kids who've grown up in church to the first-time visitors.

NURSERY & TODDLERS | SUNDAYS AT 8:30A, 10:00A, and 11:30A

During all three services, our Nursery and Toddler Rooms are staffed with loving, caring leaders for children from birth to age 3. Kids will sing, dance, and play. We want your kids to love coming to church from day one.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE | SUNDAYS AT 8:30A, 10:00A, and 11:30A

During all three services, we offer an age-appropriate time of worship and Bible lessons for 4 and 5 year olds (Pre-K and Kindergarten). Kids in this age group get a service made just for them.

KIDS CHURCH | SUNDAYS AT 8:30A, 10:00A, and 11:30A

During all three Sunday morning services, our Elementary Kids and Preteens (1st through 6th grade) gather for a service built just for them. Kids start in small group classrooms by grade level, where they connect with their leaders and dive into an activity together. From there, everyone comes together in the Kid's Chapel for worship and a Bible lesson. We wrap up back in small groups, giving kids a chance to reflect on what they learned and spend time with each other.

PRETEEN MINISTRY | SUNDAYS AT 6:30P

Preteen Ministry is designed for those in 5th-6th grade. They will dive into scripture and begin to explore their faith in a deeper way.

EVENTS

Throughout the year, we host several big events designed to help kids connect with each other, with their families, and with their small group leaders. These special events are often where kids and families walk into our ministry for the very first time.

We also take part in NCO District events like family camp, Bible quizzing, retreats, and kids camps. Along the way, our kids learn what it means to serve, with opportunities to get engaged in serving our own community.

Our Big Win

It's hard sometimes to know when you're winning in children's ministry, you know? Like, is anything we're teaching actually sinking in? Are kids really growing in their faith? That's why we decided to go ahead and define the big win for our ministry. It's the one thing that we, as a ministry team, want to achieve. It's the goal we want to keep in mind at all times. And it's what motivates and guides everything we do. It goes like this . . .

WE WIN WHEN A KID TAKES A STEP TOWARD OWNING THEIR FAITH.

TAKING A STEP

Now, we say "take a step" for a reason. It's because there's no finish line or certificate of completion when it comes to spiritual growth. Instead, spiritual growth is a journey (a life-long journey) and no two journeys are identical. That's why our big win doesn't have anything to do with a specific skill or achievement. Instead, we win anytime we see a kid take a single step closer to owning their faith.

OWNING THEIR FAITH

What, exactly, does it look like for a kid to own their faith? Well, we believe there are four things that both lead to, and are a result of, spiritual growth. We call these four things our four spiritual habits.

1. **KNOW GOD** This is an obvious one, right? Sometimes it's the only spiritual habit we can name. After all, isn't "growing spiritually" synonymous with "Finding God"? Well, not exactly, but it's still pretty important. After all, if kids are ever going to make their faith their own, they've got to start spending time with God on their own. It means opening the Bible on their own, having conversations with God on their own, and discovering how they best connect with God through worship on their own.
2. **FIND FREEDOM:** Kids need to learn how to talk about God. Sharing your story is the spiritual habit of making faith a regular, everyday, go-to topic of conversation in our lives. Because when we talk about God and His place in our story (or, more accurately, our place in His story), it helps us believe, helps us understand, and helps us take ownership of our own faith.
3. **DISCOVER PURPOSE:** Kids need to know that God made them unique, and special, and with really specific gifts, talents, passions, and resources. Then they need to use those gifts to love God, love others, and influence the world around them. Because when kids begin to discover who God made them to be, and then use their unique identity to love both God and others, they grow.
4. **MAKE A DIFFERENCE:** Engaging in a healthy community can, and should, be a spiritual habit we help our kids develop. But "healthy community" doesn't just mean hanging out with Christians. This spiritual habit is about growing in Christlike relationships with everyone, and identifying how they can make a difference in their community.

We count it as a win whenever a kid takes a step toward owning their faith by practicing one, or maybe even all four of these spiritual habits.

Discipling Kids

DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT LIVING, NOT LEARNING

Rather than only asking, “What can we teach a kid about God?” we ask, “How can we help a kid live out their faith?” It’s not just about teaching them about Jesus — it’s about modeling what faith in Jesus looks like. That’s why relationships are such a key part of our ministry. Because discipleship isn’t taught in a classroom — it’s modeled in everyday life.

DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY

In the Gospels, you don’t really see Jesus doing one-on-one discipleship. That’s because discipleship happens best in a community of people. That’s why we focus so much energy on getting kids plugged into small groups, church service, district events like camps, retreats and Bible quizzing, and why we surround kids with tons of Jesus followers. Because discipleship takes all of us!

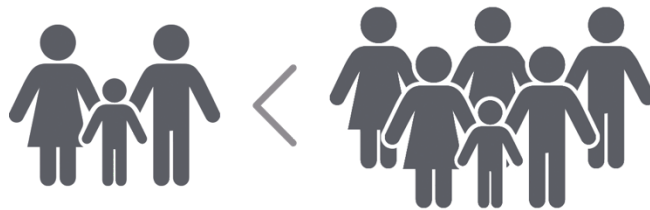
DISCIPLESHIP IS A PROCESS

Discipleship is never complete because learning to live out our faith is a life-long process. And because we know discipleship takes time, we want to put people in the lives of kids who are in it for the long-haul. That’s why as a church we connect kids with their local church leaders and parents/guardians to continue the relationship with kids when they are at church or home. The local church leaders are equipped to continue the discipleship process and build long-term relationships with each child, and we will strive to equip parents to continue the discipleship process at home.

Engaging with Small Group Leaders

As a parent, you are making a huge impact in your kid's life. The impact you're making is far more significant than any impact we, their church, could ever hope to make. You are the most important voice in your kid's life, both now and for a lifetime.

But in all our time caring for kids, we've learned something really important. (We drew a picture to help you remember it.) We believe that, in every kid's life, this is true: your best chance at influencing your kid's faith and future is to recruit other adults to influence them with you.



Dr. Kara E. Powell and Dr. Chap Clark, authors of *Sticky Faith*, encourage parents to “develop a sticky web of relationships” for their kids. We love that idea!

Especially during the childhood years, when you're laying a foundation for your kid's future faith and choices, we want to come alongside you by creating a pool of trustworthy adults who can help you influence your kid.

That's why our ministry is so committed to small groups. Small groups are about more than just good discussions. Small groups exist to connect your kid with an adult you can trust so you can better influence their faith and future.

So, this year, engage with your kid's small group leader. They can be a powerful ally for you and your family!

Safety Guidelines

The safety of your child is a priority for our ministry, so we wanted to get you in the loop on how we plan to care for and protect them.

WE SCREEN VOLUNTEERS

Before any volunteer is permitted to serve with us, they undergo a rigorous application and interview process, including a criminal background check and sexual abuse awareness training.

WE SET BOUNDARIES

We have set a number of guidelines for our children's ministry staff and volunteers. As a parent, you can help us make sure your child is well-cared for by helping us maintain these boundaries.

- No adult may ever be alone with kids.
- Adults may never be in a bathroom alone with kids.
- All rooms will have the proper ratios of trained adult volunteers.
- All staff members and volunteers must always maintain appropriate physical boundaries with kids.
- To help keep kids safe and healthy, kids will not be allowed to enter the children's ministry if they have any of the following: fever of 100° or greater (*children must be fever-free without the use of medications for 24 hours prior to returning to a classroom*), vomiting, diarrhea, chills, sore throat, excessive runny nose, bad cough, rash, pink eye, or lice.

WE HAVE STRICT PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF POLICIES

Kids are under the care and supervision of their parents until they are checked in to our children's ministry. We require all kids' 6th grade and under to be checked in by a parent or guardian and escorted to their class by the parent/guardian or by a member of our greeter team.

We encourage parents to make drop-off quick, even with younger kids who may have a hard time. Separation anxiety is normal (and healthy!) but if you want us to contact you after a certain amount of time of crying, let the leader know.

Our check-in and check-out policies are . . .

- Check-in starts 15 minutes to the start of any service. Children must be picked up no later than 15 minutes after service.
- Kids must be checked in for services by parents, using our check-in system. When you check your kids in, they will receive a nametag with their name on it.
 - If there are special instructions or allergies, please let our Host team know and their profile will be updated accordingly for our teachers.

Check in/Out Timeframes:

8:30A Service:

- Check In: 8:15 - 8:30
- Check Out: 9:30 - 9:45

10:00A Service:

- Check In: 9:45 - 10:00
- Check Out: 11:00 - 11:15

11:30A Service:

- Check In: 11:15 - 11:30
- Check Out: 12:30 - 12:45

- Parents/Guardians are listed on the nametag, and that is who can pick children up from their classrooms.
- A child may not be picked up by anyone under the age of 16 years old.
- If someone not listed picks up your child, that must be communicated with the children's pastor or check-in team prior to pick up.
- If your child has a special need or medical issue or allergy that we need to know about, let the host team know when you sign your child in.
- Please no toys from home, we do not want your child to lose or have an item broken while at church. All our classrooms have toys and activities they can use.

WE TAKE SAFETY SERIOUSLY

Because we take the safety of your kids very seriously, and we screen, and background check all the adults working with kids and we do not allow adults in the children's ministry if they aren't screened.

Exceptions:

- If your child is upset or has separation anxiety, you will need to notify the Host team or children's pastor and you will be able to go into your child's room to make the transition easier for them but may only remain in the room for a maximum of 10 minutes.
- Nursing Moms may use the nursery, please stop by the check-in desk to let them know.
- First time guests may visit their child's space for a maximum of 10 minutes.
- Those interested in serving may observe a classroom or service.

WE CONSIDER ALLERGIES

Due to the risk of allergies, we do not allow outside foods in the classrooms, and we are a **peanut free** facility.

If your child has a medical need or allergy, let the leader and a member of our host team know. We cannot administer any medications. When food and

drink are used in our children's ministry rooms, an allergy alert sign will be posted.

WE TEXT PARENTS

- If we need to get ahold of you at any point during the service, we will text you or one of our leaders will come locate you. Please make sure we have your cell number on file.
- We will text parents if children exhibit symptoms of illness, are crying inconsolably for more than 10 minutes, or if a child behaves in a violent manner.

WE HAVE EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Our church has emergency procedures posted in every classroom and all volunteers are trained for weather emergencies, medical emergencies, and evacuations and predator situations. If an emergency occurs, kids will not be released until the area is cleared and the parents have the claim sticker.

WE REPORT DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Our church policy is to report any signs or suspicions of child abuse or neglect. We follow guidelines and procedures in accordance with Ministry Safe.

DEFINING ABUSE

Sexual abuse is any occurrence in which an adult engages in sexual activity with a minor. It could be contact behavior (touching) or non-contact behavior (pictures, spying, exposure, or conversation).

Physical abuse is any contact intended to cause physical pain or injury to a child. The law does permit parents to use corporal punishment, but the discipline has to be reasonable.

Neglect is the failure to provide a child with basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention, or supervision. Neglect can also include exposure to harmful substances or situations.

SIGNS OF ABUSE

A staff member will be notified immediately if they see signs of abuse, such as Depression, sudden changes in behavior, paranoia, fear of their caregivers or others, aggressive behavior, anxiety, bed-wetting or accidents in their

underwear, imitating or talking about sexual behaviors, wounds or pain, unexplained bruises, or untreated illnesses.

Child Promotion

Nursery: (Crib side)

Infants Birth to 18 months or steady walker

- Once the child is a steady walker and at least 18 months they can be moved to the toddler nursery with approval of Children's pastor and parents.

Toddler Nursery:

18 months (steady walker) to 3 years.

- The child must be 4 **AND** potty trained before moving up to the preschool class.
- Unless approval from Children's pastor if the child is being potty trained **AND** 4 years old.
- The children's pastor will work with parents before moving the child to the Early Childhood class

Early Childhood:

- 4 years old and Potty trained and 5 years old or going into Kindergarten.
- Promoted in Fall prior to start of school year.

1st Grade to 6th Grade:

- Promoted in Fall prior to start of school year.

Stay Connected

This year, we'd love to stay in conversation with you. Here are a few ways we're hoping we can keep the lines of communication open . . .

EMAIL

We send an email just for parents every month. It's packed with information on our ministry and on how to be a more awesome parent of your kid.

You can also email any leader at any time with questions or concerns.

SOCIAL MEDIA

We post photos, videos, and updates from our ministry each week. More information about our ministry can be found on our website.

FACEBOOK: FirstNaz Kids

INSTAGRAM: FirstNaz Kids

WEBSITE: <https://firstnaz.net/>