



IDEAS IN

# Childhood Ministry

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## What About Nancy?

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Names are important to preschool teachers as they learn about a child and hopefully begin a ministry with the child and the child's family. One preschool teacher recalled a summer when she heard some teachers talk about a girl in another room at church. The things she heard prompted her to ask, "What about Nancy?"

The teacher was anxious to know more about a child that was being labeled as impossible, out-of-control, and a "demon." When the teacher heard these descriptions, she discovered that they were talking about a 5-year-old girl, not an older child with weapons! The teacher was saddened when she heard that the child had been told not to come back to church until her behavior changed.

"Tell me about Nancy," the teacher said. She was told, "Just wait, she will be in your room after promotion time." Those words echoed in the teacher's mind and she remembered thinking, *I want to know Nancy. I want her in my room.*

As she waited for promotion time, she began to think about ways she could know more about Nancy. She knew that Nancy would be welcome in her Sunday School room and considered how she might help Nancy. She could enlist another teacher who would focus on helping Nancy adjust to her new Sunday School room after promotion. She considered asking someone else to be the department director, so she could be that teacher for Nancy. She contacted a senior adult "saint" in her church and requested that she join her in praying for Nancy and her family. The friend encouraged the teacher to continue with her plans to help Nancy.

The teacher already had a relationship with Nancy's family because she had taught her brother the year before. As the weeks passed, the teacher kept in touch with Nancy's grandmother because she had two other grandchildren in her room. She visited her in the hospital after surgery. At this time she learned some specific things about Nancy that helped her understand that what had happened before Nancy's birth could have an effect on her behavior. She also learned that Nancy's mother had rejected her and left her in the care of her grandmother.

On promotion Sunday, one of the bus workers at church brought several children to the teacher's room. The bus worker explained that some of the children would be going to another room and said, "I thought you would want Nancy." The teacher said, "I would love to have Nancy." She watched as the shy little girl stepped behind the bus worker, took her hand, and entered the room with her. She had prayed for the child for two months, and now the time had come to welcome Nancy to the kindergarten Sunday School class.

The teacher followed through with an idea that she hoped would help Nancy, not just in Sunday School but in her kindergarten classroom in school. She made some inquiries to locate the teacher where Nancy was enrolled in kindergarten. She explained to the school teacher that Nancy was one of her pupils in Sunday School and that she knew other children in her family. She told the teacher that she would only have Nancy one hour a week but that Nancy would be in her school classroom five days a week. She told the school teacher that she would pray for her and would like to keep in touch with her during the year. The teachers exchanged e-mail addresses. The teacher quickly learned and was grateful to know that the school teacher was a Christian and welcomed the connection.

In the meantime, the teacher and other teachers in their room at church observed Nancy during Sunday School. The teacher saw none of the behavior that had been described to her. There was no need for an "extra" teacher because Nancy was involved in activities and in group time with no labels and no warnings about her behavior. Unconditional love was waiting for Nancy and was demonstrated to her at the first encounter. They thought, "Surely this cannot be the same child we heard about in the summer."

The relationship with the school teacher continued. She visited the school to eat lunch with Nancy and meet her teacher. She e-mailed the teacher to tell about happy times with Nancy in Sunday School. The teacher kept in touch about Nancy in the school classroom. She told the Sunday School teacher that she had talked to her principal about the connection because she wanted him to know about Nancy. The school teacher said, "He is a believer, too."

The teacher decided to tell about her experience because she knows the difference that one can make in the life of a child. Ask the teacher today, "What about Nancy?" and she would talk about seeing her family attend a special program at church, asking a youth teacher to contact Nancy's older sister about coming to Sunday School, and sharing a prayer request from Nancy's grandfather. She would describe Nancy as a precious child she taught for a year but would remember in the years ahead.

### Some ABCs for teachers:

Avoid labeling a child, and avoid believing the information received about a child with negative labels.

Be ready to welcome a child with a desire to demonstrate unconditional love, asking God to help you make a difference in the life of a child.

Consider ways you can make connections in the community to involve others outside your church such as a school teacher, a childcare provider, a neighbor, or a doctor.

The teacher is willing to share the story about Nancy to encourage other teachers to expect great things and continuous blessings when they find a child that could have been lost to knowing about God's love and His plan for her life.

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