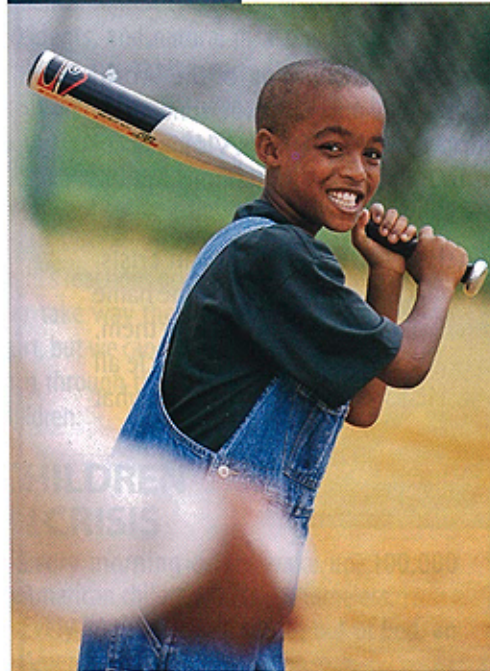
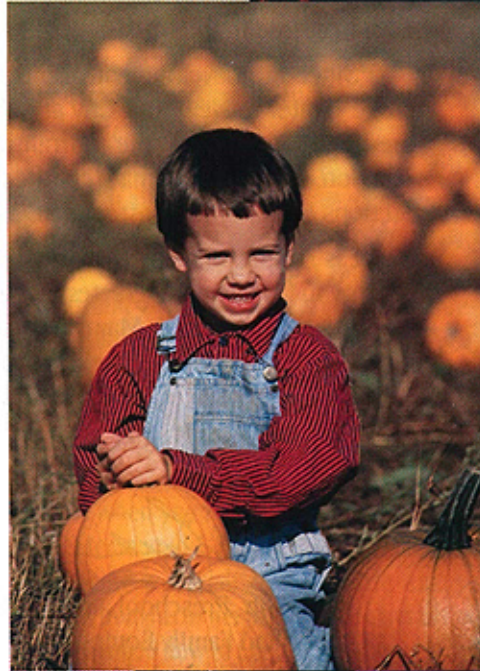


Oklahoma Baptists Protecting Children



A PLAN FOR
PROTECTING
PRESCHOOLERS AND
CHILDREN IN
OKLAHOMA BAPTIST
CHURCHES



PHASE IV

(a removable supplement to
the *Equipping* magazine)



Dear Pastor and Church Leaders,

Children are in a crisis daily. Their world crumbling around them while they have little or no skills to cope or understand what is happening to them and the people they love. Violence has infected our children through television, toys, and games. Worldly powers have transformed our families into cravers of materialism, power, and intellectual superiority. The results are abuse, divorce, excessive work loads, latchkey children, homes full of things, children rearing children, stress and violence.

Last fall, Linda Reeves, my counterpart in Mississippi, and I both desired to compile articles which would invite others to assist in protecting children from crisis and minister to them when those events occur. We also desired to assist our churches in protecting children through preparing for emergencies such as fire, natural disasters, and violence as well as playground safety. We agreed, Linda and the Mississippi Preschool/Children's Team would write the "Children in Crisis" materials while I would write the "Emergency" and "Playground Safety" materials. Once the materials were completed we would make them available to the churches in both states.

The emergency and playground safety materials were made available to Oklahoma churches in May 2001, Phase III of Oklahoma Baptists Protecting Children, as an insert in the Equipping magazine. The "Children in Crisis Facts" and "What Can Churches Do?" are Phase IV of the Oklahoma Baptist Protecting Children included in this magazine. Phase I (Developing Poilices, Safe Environment, Security Systems, and Hygiene Procedures), Phase II (Preventing Child Abuse), and Phase III (Emergency and playground safety) were included in previous Equipping Magazines and are available by contacting Sheri Babb, 405-942-3800, ext 642 or email sbabb@bgco.org.

Please recognize the quality work of the Mississippi team: Don Hicks, Robin Keels, Linda Reeves, and Debbie Sill. We are grateful for their insight, wisdom, and great work. As the materials are being formatted for Oklahoma, I have taken the liberty to modify and adapt these materials as needed for Oklahoma Baptists. When modifications and adaptations have occurred in the Mississippi material, the print has been italicized.

Since the development of the Mississippi materials, a major tragedy has occurred—the **bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C.** Because of this tragedy and our experience with the tragic bombing of the Murrah building in Oklahoma City, I have **added a section on Tragic Events/Violence.** In addition, since **Oklahoma's children have experienced the most violent tornado** in the history of the United States, sections on Natural Disaster and Death have been added too.

It is my prayer that the enclosed material will be helpful in understanding and acknowledging children in crisis. Thank you for being the greatest advocate for Oklahoma children. Great, because you love, care, and protect in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. May our voices continue to resound, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:13-14). And then, may we open our arms to encircle all children with our love and care as Jesus did. "And he took them in to His arms. . ." May He forever be glorified for what all we do in His name.

In His Arms,

Sheri Babb, Preschool and Children's Ministries Specialist
Church and Family Equipping Team, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma

*Lord our hearts cry out to You,
Show your love for children,
Exhibit your power to sustain a hurting world,
Plant your hope in the minds of a nation struck with violence.
Lord, cleanse our hearts
Give us desires for the things you desire for us,
Show us your way. Teach us to ask from a pure heart,*

*Free from unselfish motives.
Open our eyes that we may see what you see.
Open our ears that we may listen to what you hear.
Give us words that only you would speak.
Father, we desire your kingdom and will on earth as it is in heaven.
For our children, we ask these things, In your precious Son's name.
Amen*

If clarification on this information is desired, contact Sheri Babb, Preschool and Children's Ministry Specialist, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, 3800 N. May, Oklahoma City, OK 73112. Telephone (405) 942 - 3800 ext. 642 or email sbabb@bgco.org.

"And He Took Them Into His Arms..."

Drugs, violence, abuse, home alone natural disasters, bombings, illnesses—CRISIS—overwhelming, disbelief...His response—"And he took the children in his arms,..." (Mark 10:16, NIV). What an example Christ gave to us as he accepted the children and challenged us to "change and become like little children" (Matthew 18:3, NIV) so that we may enter heaven!

Recently, our children woke up to a tragedy that shocked all of us. The "Attack on America" threw our children into a crisis state as parents, teachers and significant adults—children's role models—stood in disbelief and shock, wondering what to do. During these moments and hours to follow, children were experiencing a mixture of emotions.

Often when shock occurs, adult thoughts are directed toward what is happening, problem-solving, and the hurting or dying; leaving children bewildered, unsure and insecure. Thus, tragic events such as bombings, violence, domestic abuse, divorce, illness, tragic accidents, and natural disasters are crisis for children. Every child reacts differently toward a crisis and immediate reactions differ from the long-term reactions. Some act as if it never happened, others fear, some laugh, and others may want to fix it right now and make it the same. We cannot change a child's reactions or emotions nor take away the pain and hurt, but we can walk arm in arm through the crisis with children.

CHILDREN IN CRISIS

- Every morning as we wake up, 100,000 American children wake up homeless.
- Every 20 seconds, as we get out of bed, an American child is arrested.
- Every 44 seconds, about the time it takes to walk to the kitchen and put on the coffee, an American baby is born into poverty.
- Every 11 minutes, while we drink our first cup of coffee, an American child is reported abused or neglected.
- Every 8 minutes, about the time it takes us to shower, a child in America is arrested for a violent crime.
- Every 19 minutes, while we brush our teeth and dress, a baby dies in America.



- Every 24 seconds, as we lock the doors and head for the car, a baby in America is born to an unwed mother.
- Every minute, while we unlock our car, get in, and adjust our seat, an American baby is born to a teenage mother.
- Every 4 minutes, while we are getting out of our car and walking into our place of work, an American child is arrested for drug abuse.
- Every 3 hours, about three times during our workday, an American child or youth under 20 is a homicide victim.
- Every four hours, about the period of time from beginning work to lunchtime, a child or youth in America commits suicide.
- Every 42 minutes, while you are having lunch, a child or youth under 20 in America, will die from an accident.
- Every second, about the time it takes us to pick up a phone receiver, a public school student is suspended from an American school.
- Every day before you go to bed, a person under 20 in America dies from HIV infection.
- Every 26 seconds an American child runs away from home.
- Every 9 minutes a baby in America is born at very low birth weight (less than 3 lb 4 oz)
- Every 37 minutes a baby in American is born to a mother who is not a high school graduate.

In America...

- 3 in 5 children have their mothers in the work force.
- 1 in 7 children has a worker in their family but is still poor.
- 1 in 3 children will be poor at some point in their childhood.
- 1 in 6 children is poor.
- 1 in 8 children lives in a family receiving food stamps.
- 1 in 5 children is born to a mother who did not graduate from high school.
- 1 in 5 children has a foreign born mother.
- 1 in 3 children is behind a year in school.
- 1 in 8 children never graduate from high school.
- 2 in 5 children never complete a single year of college.
- Out of every 100 Kindergarteners, 88 will graduate from high school.
- 1 in 60 children see their parents divorced in any year.



- 1 in 2 children will live in a single parent family at some point in childhood.
- 1 in 24 children live with neither parent.
- In Oklahoma only 23.2 percent of the population live in the nuclear family (married couples with children). The nation is 23.5 percent.
- 1 in 3 babies are born to unmarried parents.
- 1 in 8 babies are born to a teenage mother.
- 1 in 12 children has a disability.
- 1 in 139 children will die before their first birthday.
- 1 in 1056 children will be killed by guns before the age of 20.

From the Children's Defense Fund (CDF),
The State of American's Children,
(Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 2001)

FROM MY HEART

I have often wondered why Jesus did not give us details on how to slow ourselves down, keep a slow pace with children, let a child be a child, what to do when parents divorce, or how to protect children from abuse. Perhaps the reason he did not was because the Hebrew child was considered a gift from God. Children were free to play in the courtyard of the temple as mothers waited for fathers who were inside the temple. Children played and worked alongside parents as parents worked, shopped, and went about the day. Thus, children were constantly being taught throughout the day, night, and at bedtime. "These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Imagine a Jewish child playing and yet observing from his or her parents the ways of God. Children learned how to live out the laws of Moses as they watched their parents and others live the law. Let us model for our children Godly behaviors so that our children will be drawn to Him. If Jesus literally walked in our market place, up and down the aisles of our church, into the classroom at school and church, down the sidewalks of our communities, and in our homes with our families, what would he say and do? Interestingly enough, He does and is in all those places. He is there through the Holy Spirit living in us. What will we say and do?

—Sheri Babb

Broaden Our Embrace...Caring for Children

Christopher

Christopher was six years old and in the first grade the first time he was admitted to Shriner's Hospital. He had blond shoulder length hair and pretty blue eyes.



Chris also had a bone defect. In the next few weeks, Chris was scheduled for surgery, a leg amputation.

Chris arrived at the hospital on a Friday afternoon with his dad. I listened as Chris' dad told him he had to head back home and back to work. His dad told him he would call on Sundays, but would not be able to visit for several weeks. They lived in a neighboring state and it was too far to drive and his dad couldn't miss any days of work.

As Chris's dad prepared to leave he told Chris to remember how much he loved him. He also told him to be very brave because the other children would look up to him. He asked Chris to help care for the other children on the ward. Many of the children were in wheelchairs, had braces, or were confined to their beds. Chris walked with a limp, but otherwise he could move around fairly easily.

Chris was in the hospital several weeks before the surgery. He attended school, helped the nurses and teachers, and played with the other children. No one prepared him for the surgery. Chris didn't know about his leg until the procedure was complete. Chris has been in and out of the hospital numerous times for different procedures. Doctors' visits, tests, x-rays, and new prosthesis, will always be a part of life for him.

Amanda

Amanda is ten years old. She lives with her mom, Elaine, a six-year-old brother, and a three-year-old sister. Amanda's mom works two jobs and barely makes enough money to support her family. One job begins at 6 a.m. The second job ends at 8 p.m.



Amanda's mom wakes Amanda up when she leaves for work in the morning. Amanda gets her brother and sister up, helps them dress, gives them a bowl of cereal, and walks them to day care and to school. Elaine can't afford after school care, so Amanda meets her brother after school and picks up her little sister from day care. They spend afternoons watching television and playing until Elaine gets home. By then Elaine, and the kids, are tired and cranky. By the time they have supper and take baths it's time for bed.

Elaine worries because her kids are home by themselves. She worries because Amanda who can barely take care of herself also has responsibility for her younger brother and sister. Elaine wishes it could be different, but what else can she do?

Justin

Justin was in the second grade when his parents divorced. Their marriage had been rocky from the start. They had lived separately almost as long as they had lived together. They fought constantly. Problems with drugs and alcohol were always an issue along with financial strains and verbal abuse. His parents finally realized it wasn't going to work. They divorced. Justin and his mom moved to another town.



Several years later both Justin's mom and dad remarried. Justin lives with his mom and stepfather in another state. Justin's stepfather had three children from a previous marriage. They don't live with Justin's family, but they are free to come and go whenever they want. Justin's father and stepmother had a new baby when Justin was a teenager.

Justin spends time with his dad and grandparents on holidays and in the summer. Before they moved out of state, he also spent weekends with them. Although it's been eight years, Justin still wishes his real parents could get back together.

Lisa

Lisa arrived at the children's shelter about 1 a.m. on a Friday night. She was 18 months old. A neighbor heard noises from their apartment next door. It sounded like a baby crying. The noise continued for hours. Lisa was alone in the apartment when the police found her. I was working in the nursery when they brought her in. I undressed her and began to bathe her. Lisa spread her legs as if in anticipation of what might come next. I put on a clean diaper and clean clothes and rocked her to sleep that evening.



I can still hear the sounds of Lisa and the other children crying and whimpering in their sleep as I walk through the ward in the early morning hours. I can't even begin to imagine all they have been through at such young ages. They are safe for now, but what about tomorrow or the next day. What does the future hold for children who are victims of abuse?

The four stories you have just read may sound unbelievable, but they are true stories about real kids, in real families, with everyday struggles. Unfortunately, there are many more stories like them. You know who they are. They are the children who sit in worship on Sunday mornings, the children who live down the street, the children who attend school with your sons and daughters, the children who live in shelters or the back seats of cars. They are the children we read and hear about in the news.

Diana Garland, author of *Precious in His Sight* says: "Children and youth in America today confront an array of challenges and difficulties, and they differ in many respects from those we faced when we were younger. These difficulties are the consequences of choices adults have made and the values our society has embraced."¹ The lives of many children are thrown into chaos by family crises such as divorce, unemployment, sexual abuse or physical abuse, illness or death of a family member or close friend, poverty, or a geographical move. A crisis can last only a day, such as an argument with a friend; or a lifetime, such as a child who has been sexually abused.

After parents and family members, teachers and childcare workers play a tremendous role in the lives of children. Childcare workers can offer an emotional support system that provides a child with security, love, stability, affection, respect, and acceptance. Spending time with a child, listening to a child, asking questions, allowing a child to talk about their thoughts and feelings, recognizing the child for who he or she is, showing encouragement and support can make an incredible impact on the life of a child.

In this material we will take a brief look at the chaos in which many children live because of crises in their families. We'll look at statistics and stories of children in crises. We will discuss our responsibility as Christians and as a body of believers to respond to the needs of children. We will look at our role as an advocate for children in our church and our community.

What is child advocacy? Diana Garland says, "An advocate is one who stands up and speaks out for others. Advocates plead the cause of others. Child advocates act on behalf of preschoolers, children, and youth to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. Children

need others to be voices in their behalf, to present their needs, and to persist until those needs are met. They need advocates. We usually assume that parents are looking out for their children, but for many children's needs to be met, others need to join the chorus. Their parents' voices are not loud enough. They are, after all, our children too."²

God has entrusted the care of children to us. We have been called to broaden our embrace—to care for the children around us. He reminds us of that in the Gospels. Remember Jesus' reaction to the disciples when they tried to send the children away. "People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them." (Mark 10:13-14, 16 NIV)

Jesus continued to talk about the importance of children in the kingdom. Matthew 18:1-4 says: "At that time the disciples

came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' And he said, I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."



"He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'" (Mark 9:36-37 NIV)

What an awesome responsibility we have as Christians and as a congregation of believers. We

have been given the responsibility of caring for God's children —of making their world a better place. We can't always take away the hurt and pain, but we can walk through the crises with them. By reaching out to children and their families in friendship and love we can make a difference in the lives of children.

"He has showed you... what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8 RSV)

- To do justice—to speak out for those who have no voice.
- To love kindness—ministry projects (personal encounters with children) listening to a child, being a friend, caring for parents.
- To walk humbly with your God—we can't do this on our own, but through prayer we can ask for God's leadership in our doing and loving.

¹ Diana Garland, *Precious in His Sight*, 2nd edition (Birmingham: New Hope 1996).

² Garland, *Precious in His Sight*.

What Can Churches Do To Help Children in Crisis?

In the case studies presented on the previous page, we focused on four areas of crisis that impact children and families in our society today—a childhood illness, divorce, latchkey children, and abuse. Read the case studies again. While you read, put the face of a child in your church on the face of each child in the case studies.

ILLNESS

Research shows that one child in 10 will experience a chronic physical illness, such as asthma, epilepsy, or cerebral palsy before they turn 15. Other children suffer from prolonged illnesses or physical disabilities. *Any time a child is severely ill or has to be hospitalized it is a stressful time for the child and family. The family will be anxious over the child's recovery, even if the physicians are doing all they can for the child, about the financial strain, loss of work and what needs to be done at work, and the disrupted routine of the family. The child may be fearful and anxious over being separated from the family, what is happening to him and what will happen next.* Is there a child in your church who has an illness or disability? How can you minister to that child and to that child's family?

Here are some helpful ideas. Think of others and continue to add to this list.

1. Give the child a toy or game he can do in the hospital. *Make a photo album with photos of the children in his Sunday School class. Include a special note or drawing from each child and yourself.*
2. Provide opportunities for children in their Sunday School classes or other groups to make cards, write notes, or bring small gifts to send to the child.
3. Ask volunteers to sit with the child or help with meals and daily tasks so parents can have some time on their own.
4. Explain to the other children in the child's



class what is happening to the child and ask how they feel about it. *They may want to act out their feelings and thoughts. Encourage this dramatic play.* Help the children understand how they can be a friend to someone who is sick or in the hospital.

5. Be willing to laugh and cry with the family. Share their hurt and their pain.
6. Provide opportunities for the child to talk about his/her illness or *ask as many questions as often as he or she wishes.* Ask questions and be willing to listen as he/she shares his/her feelings of fear and frustration. *Give the child an opportunity to re-enact scenes from his/her treatment if they choose.*
7. Care for other siblings in the family. They are experiencing crisis themselves and need help sorting out their feelings and their fears.
8. *Without being intrusive learn as much as you can about the child's illness and treatment so that you are prepared to meet her needs or answer her questions once she returns to church.*
9. *Reduce the fear of the children in your class by reading a book about going to the hospital. This will also help the chronically ill child understand that she is not alone.*

10. Provide activities that encourage dramatic play (doctor's kit, doctor's smock, surgical mask, first aid kit supplies [gauze, band aids], and dolls for patients).

DIVORCE

Divorce is on a steady rise in America today. One in two marriages ends in divorce. Researchers say that every year more than one million children have become children of divorce. Other than a death of a parent, a divorce may be the most devastating thing that can happen to a child.

Children cannot see their parents as separate and often think that if their parents stop loving each other they may stop loving them too. Many times they will act as if they have never heard the news about the divorce. Since children are egocentric (self-centered, everything revolves around them), they may blame themselves or take responsibility for the problem. They may feel that if they are good, get sick, or cause problems that draw the attention to them the divorce will go away. When their attempt fails, they feel powerless and rejected and may demand even more attention.

Once the divorce occurs, parents may be preoccupied with their problems and give less attention to the children. The children may feel abandoned and show signs of withdrawal, lack of concentration, sickness, aggression, change in behavior patterns, or regress to thumb sucking or bedwetting.

Here are some helpful ideas to help a child whose parents are going through a divorce.

1. Help children understand what is going on with their family. Consider using the resource *KidShare* (available from LifeWay Christian Resources) with children whose parents have divorced (during a time other than the Sunday School session).
2. Help children in identifying their feelings and fears about divorce. But avoid intruding or pressuring a child to open up.
3. Give permission for children to grieve and mourn following the divorce.
4. Assure the children that they are loved and that one adult is going to care for them and provide material needs.
5. Assure the children that they are not responsible for their parents' divorce. Many children think they are at fault. Help them understand they are not to blame.



6. Provide opportunities for the children to talk about the divorce and the parent who is absent. Help the children to realize that they can't wish their parents back together.
7. Help Children adjust to the changes that accompany divorce.
8. Involve both men and women in preschool and children's ministries in your church. These workers can fill some of the void and serve as role models for children of divorce.
9. Offer ministry programs for single parent families in your church.
10. *At church, for preschoolers, plan activities (finger painting, play dough, easel painting, dramatic play, stand-up figures in the block area) that help them express their feelings and emotions through play. For school age children, provide opportunities for them to express themselves through writing, drawing, or playing games. Provide opportunities for talking about the range of feelings we have so that children begin to understand that everyone has emotions and are free to express them.*

11. Ask teachers and church members to use positive terminology and refrain from negative terms such as "broken home." Don't automatically assume that the child's difficulties are a result of the divorce.
12. *Be sensitive and accepting to all children. Your acceptance and love for everyone helps children understand that they are loved. Assure them that their parents love them and will never stop being their parents although they may stop being husband and wife.*

LATCHKEY CHILDREN

Amanda's story reminds us of the many children who come home to an empty house after school each day. They are called latchkey children because many of them carry a house key so they can let themselves in when they arrive at home. Single parents work outside the home to provide an income for their families. In many two-parent families both parents need to work just to make ends meet. Therefore, more children are spending time alone while their parents are at work.

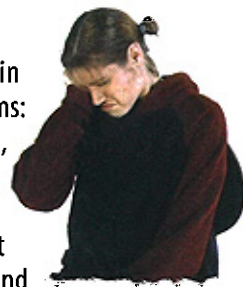


What can churches do to care for latchkey children?

1. Begin an after-school or full-day ministry program in your church.
 - A mentoring program for children and youth in your church.
 - An after-school tutoring program.
 - A neighborhood safety program.
2. Provide summer programs for children whose parents work. Include a variety of options including creative arts, sports, field trips, camping trips, etc.
3. Provide an after-school hotline. Children can call an adult when they get in from school or in case of an emergency. Senior adults could be a good resource for working the hotline.
4. Offer a training program for adults in your church who are interested in becoming family care providers.

ABUSE

Abuse comes in several different forms: emotional, physical, verbal, and sexual. Physical abuse is easier to recognize, but emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse can have the same detrimental effects on a child. Factors such as alcohol and drug abuse, poverty, divorce, and mental illness contribute to child neglect or abuse. Lisa is a victim of sexual abuse, but Justin also suffered from emotional abuse and neglect.



What can churches do for children who are victims of abuse?

1. Be cautious and selective in choosing children's workers. Know the workers in your church. Put in place a plan to protect children and teachers. Contact Sheri Babb, Preschool and Children's Ministry Specialist, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma at (405) 942-3000 ext. 648 or by email sbabb@bgco.org for Phase II: Oklahoma Baptists Protecting Children (Preventing Child Abuse: The Church's Obligation, Developing Child Abuse Policies, Sample Child Abuse Policies, Responding to Allegations at Church, and Obtaining Background Checks).
2. Develop guidelines and policy statements for protecting children in your church.
3. Conduct background checks on all children's workers. Contact the Oklahoma Baptist Convention's Preschool and Children's Ministry office for details.

4. Teach children that their bodies are private. Tell them no one has a right to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.
5. Help provide for basic nurturing needs of children during times of crisis.
6. Provide support and encouragement for families.
7. Offer family support programs in your church or help develop a community network of family support programs.
8. Begin a mentoring program for children, youth, and adults in your church.

NATURAL DISASTER

by Sheri Babb

The most common natural disaster in Oklahoma is a tornado. Tornadoes or other natural disasters are frightening for adults but even more so for children. An adult's immediate reaction during a natural disaster crisis is usually fear for the family's safety. This fear as well as other fears that surface during storms is transferred to children.



After the initial shock, a child may feel frightened and desire attention. In the midst of the parents desire to fix things, a child struggles to understand the cause of the event or his parent's frustration and may blame himself. He may struggle with the lack of self-esteem as a result of his helpless feelings. Children need parents and significant adults to reassure them that they did not cause the natural disaster or the irritability of the adults around them. As you read the list below be ready to add the ideas you have for assisting children during a natural disaster.

1. Teachers and parents need to have and know the evacuation plan for the church in case of an emergency. For information on designing such a plan, contact Sheri Babb, (405) 942-3000 ext.648 or email sbabb@bgco.org. Ask for Phase III of Oklahoma Baptists Protecting Children.
2. Encourage parents to establish their own home plan and practice it without causing fear in their children. Remind them to help others (babysitters and grandparents) who may be with their children to know what to do in case of an emergency.
3. Provide clothing, household goods, canned goods, water, diapers, and other valuable

supplies that families may need during a natural disaster.

4. Be available to house children and parents who may be homeless as a result of a storm, earthquake, mudslide, flood or other natural disaster.
5. Volunteer to keep the children while the parents arrange for the family's needs.
6. Remind parents to keep their child's needs in mind and take time to meet those needs. Help parents know their child needs lap time and a special hug and love.
7. Keep as much normalcy in a child's schedule and life as possible. A consistent stable routine helps children feel secure and safe.
8. Whether at church or assisting children, give children opportunities to re-enact the event if they choose. Follow the child's lead in expressing himself. If he wants to talk, listen. If she wants to play alone, provide small dolls, cars, blocks and block accessories to enhance her desire to express her feelings through play. Provide activities at church that will give preschoolers and children opportunities to express their reactions to the tragedy.
9. Do not be afraid to express your own feelings. Be real and use simple words to convey how you coped with the disaster.
10. Talk about the community helpers and how they came together to help everyone. Mention others who came to help and how they helped.
11. Talk about the good part. Help children know about those who survived and how God helped and is helping so many people during these times.
12. Remind parents that children deal with disasters like the adults around them. When parents return to normal and put the disaster behind them children are apt to recover more quickly.

DEATH

by Sheri Babb

Although we would like to shelter young children from death and grief, it cannot be avoided. Their first encounter is usually a bug, a small animal in the yard or street, or the death of a pet. Sometimes it may be the death of a significant adult or family member.



Children see death in progressive stages. Children younger than five-years-old do not see death as permanent and do not realize the causes of death. Five through nine-year-olds accept that a person is dead but still does not accept that everyone dies.

Babies through older children cope with death and grief in their personal way and time. Some children may be curious and try to see what has happened by digging the pet up. Children are often concerned that their parents or someone they love may die. Many times children take the responsibility for the death thinking that if they themselves had behaved better the pet or family member would have lived.

During the grief stage children may stop playing and suddenly be sad for a few minutes and then return to play. Or, while shopping with a parent or working with others at church they may stop and ask a question or give a thought about the death of the family member or the pet.

How can we help? The following are a few suggestions.

1. Remind family members to tell a child about death in a factual sensitive way. His questions, fears, and confusions need to be addressed. Follow the child's lead and respond to his concerns and questions with simple facts. Don't be afraid of the words "dying" or "death." Simple plain concrete language keeps down confusion. Avoid certain phrases like "we lost him." The literal minded child would wonder or ask, "Where did you lose him?" A child may not be able to understand death but concrete simple facts aid in his distinguishing between reality and fantasy.
2. If a child is concerned about you or another person they love dying, reassure him by explaining that you do not expect to die for a long time.
3. Parents and teachers can help a child know what to expect at the funeral home. Explain what will and is happening in simple words and steps. Be available at the funeral home to take the child on a stroll and give him a break. Offer to provide childcare while the family remains at the funeral home.
4. Visit the family and child in the home. Take some food and drinks for the family and add a special treat for the child.
5. Call the child on the phone and remind him that you love him.
6. Give a child a special stuffed animal or gift to help him feel special and loved.
7. Show feelings openly and honestly. Children need to see adults express real feelings.

8. Keep the child's schedule as consistent as possible at home and church. Volunteer to help in getting the child to church when parents are not available to do so.
9. Give extra hugs, lap time and attention. Children who are grieving need special attention. This gives the child an opportunity to ask questions or have someone to listen.
10. Be patient and answer the many repetitive questions a child may ask. Sometimes try asking the question back to the child.
11. If a child is feeling guilty, reassure her that she had nothing to do with the death of the pet or family member.
12. Provide activities (dramatic play, art, outdoor play or story telling) to help a child express himself and process his grief.

began formulating tips for helping children cope with this tragic event. We are appreciative of Mary Ann Bradberry (former Childhood Minister from First Baptist Broken Arrow Oklahoma), Biblical Studies Designer at LifeWay Christian Resources for the information she placed on LifeWay's Website (which you will find below). We forwarded this helpful information to Oklahoma Baptist pastors and ministers once it became available. There is no need to formulate a new resource when this material was so helpful. If additions or adaptations have been made, they will be in italics.

morning after the tragedy?" I felt at a loss for words and am not sure what I would have drawn that Sunday. Perhaps, I would have done exactly



Pentagon, Washington D.C. 2001

what the children did. Draw a picture of something totally unexpected. Many children drew pictures of their family, themselves with a friend, a dog, or other familiar things. These were images of secu-

rity. After all how do you draw a picture of SECURITY? How do you draw a picture of HOPE? For some children it may be playing with a friend, a tree standing tall and alive, a family together, or perhaps a pet. It may be several weeks before children draw sadness or depict actual bits of the tragedy.

TRAGIC EVENTS/ VIOLENCE

by Sheri Babb

Television brought the tragic terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001 into our homes. Every adult and child in America felt the impact of the tragedy. The reality is an act such as this and other acts of violence spin our children into a crisis.



Twin Towers, NYC 2001

Many children's workers have shared that most of the children in their classes on the Sunday after the tragedy had little or no need to express themselves, workers reported that they talked with the children about the tragedy, gave them an opportunity to talk and ask questions and then distributed sheets of paper, colored pens, and crayons to draw and express

their feelings. Sunday School teachers reported that most of the children expressed little or no anxieties or feelings about the bombing.

May I ask, "What did you feel that Sunday

The important thing is that you listened and connected with the children. No doubt they loved it. This is what children need—someone showing the love of Christ, the acceptance of God, the care of a teacher, and a comforting church. They need teachers and adults who provide opportunities for them to hear and learn Bible truths during a time of crisis—teachers who encircle them in their arms. After you have read the following materials, make notes on some of the things that were important to your experiences while working with the children during this crisis.

Children's advocates throughout the United States immediately became concerned about the children in New York City and Washington D.C. Many

Helping Children Cope with Tragic Events by Mary Ann Bradberry

"Do not be afraid. I am with you" Joshua 1:9. God's assurance to Joshua can provide comfort and strength to parents who are trying to help their children deal with the tragic events that have come to be known as the "Attack on America." Traumatic events shatter a child's perception that his world is safe and secure. Children react to such events with a mixture of emotions. However, most children will experience increased anxiety and emotional stress. These feelings may be exhibited in physical behaviors such as stomachaches, bad dreams, inability to sleep soundly, increased attachment to parents, (afraid to let them out of sight for fear something will happen to parents) and irritability. In addition to physical behaviors, children may react to these events with fear, anger, or denial.

Fear—Children become afraid when things

happen that they do not understand and when daily routines are interrupted. As they hear bits and pieces of conversations, see TV news programs, and watch the reactions of adults, they are forced to draw their own but often distorted conclusions.



Anger—Unlike adults, children do not know how to deal with emotions. They cannot understand what is going on, why they feel insecure, or why

they are so uncomfortable with the emotions they see and feel in the adults around them. As a result they feel overwhelmed and respond the only way they know how—acting out in anger to siblings, friends, teachers, or parents. Anger creates energy, which must be released. Teach your child that anger is a healthy emotion that can be expressed in an acceptable manner.

Denial—Faced with more than they can handle, children often turn to their imaginations and block out unpleasant events. They may refuse or have no desire to talk or acknowledge the event. Play especially becomes a powerful tool for these children to express their feelings. Children may have difficulty determining what is real and what is fantasy. The terrorist events may seem to be more like a movie or TV show than actual, real happenings.

Ways Parents Can Help

Consider the following suggestions to help your child deal with his fears and anger.

Talk to your child. Asking your child questions will help you know what she is thinking. Talking will help you identify the specific fears with which he may be dealing.

Allow your child to talk about what he has heard. Acknowledge and help your child express his feelings. Your child may be fearful that the same events will happen where he lives. As he hears TV reporters talk about the deaths of moms and dads, he may be afraid that his mom or dad will be die. He also may fear that he or someone he knows will be hurt. Sometimes listening is more important than having an answer.

Be open and honest in your conversations. Do not be afraid to use words like *died* or *death*. These concrete terms will aid children in their quest to distinguish reality from fantasy.

Limit TV viewing. Watching continuous news coverage of the events only causes children to become more anxious. If you choose to allow your child to watch the events on TV, watch with him so that you can answer his questions.

Encourage physical activity. For the most part, children deal with their feelings through some kind of acting out. Anger creates energy that must be released. Help your child express anger appropriately through running outdoors, kicking a soccer ball, playing with play dough, or riding a bike.

Draw or write. Provide paper, crayons, markers, clay, paper bags, and other art materials. Children can use these materials to create drawings, writings, or collages that express their feelings about the events. Encourage older children to begin a journal to record thoughts and feelings.

Teach spiritual truths. Events such as "Attack on America" provide opportunities for greater awareness of biblical truths. Children will want to know why such an event happened. Why did God let it happen? The simple but difficult answer is that "we do not know." Some people choose to disobey God and hurt others. Assure your child that God loves us and



knows what is best. We can trust God even when we do not understand why bad things happen. God does not want us to be afraid. You and your child may be comforted by sharing these Bible verses together:

- Psalm 73:23 "I am always with you."
- 1 Peter 5:7 "Turn your worries over to him. He cares about you."

- Psalm 56:3 "When I am afraid, I will trust in you."
- John 14:27 "I leave my peace with you. I give my peace to you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid."
- Hebrews 13:6 "The Lord helps me. I will not be afraid."

• Psalm 46:1 "God is our place of safety. He gives us strength. He is always there to help us in times of trouble." (Psalm 46 would be a good passage to read together as a family.)

Pray ...for victims and their families.

Your child may want to recall specific groups of people such as pilots, firefighters, or police officers who have been hurt or killed.

- for firefighters, police officers, doctors, and others who are helping people.
- for President Bush and other government leaders.

Remember that your child's greatest need is reassurance of safety. Returning to school and other daily routines as much as possible will help him feel secure and assure him that life has not been totally disrupted. When parents and other caring adults give children time, affection, and hope through Jesus Christ, they help them find a way through their fears, anger, and confusion.

Mary Ann Bradberry is a biblical studies designer at LifeWay Christian Resources and teaches children at Brentwood Baptist Church.

"People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come unto me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them." (Mark 10:13-14, 16 NIV)

"Sometimes I would like to ask God why he allows poverty, famine, and injustice when he could do something about it."

"Well - why don't you ask Him?"

"Because I'm afraid God might ask me the same question?"

(Anonymous, from Children's Defense Fund 1991:13)



How does it feel to be hungry?

"... like I ain't got nobody."

—Kamal, age 5

"... like nobody is taking care of me."

—Harry, age 7

"... like I shouldn't exist."

—Wilfred, age 14

(participants, Hunger Action Coalition, Detroit, Michigan)



"Sometimes I pray that I won't be poor no more and sometimes I sit up at night and cry. But it doesn't change anything. Crying just helps the hurt and the pain. It doesn't change anything."

One day I asked my mom why the kids always tease me and she said because they don't understand, but I do understand about being on welfare and being poor, and it can hurt."

(Anthony's story, Welcome the Child, by Kathleen Gray)

What More Can We Do to Help Children?

As I write this resource piece, I continue to be overwhelmed with the subject of Children in Crisis. We have only touched the surface. There are so many children who need our love and care. I am convinced, though, that churches - especially children's workers - can and must make a difference in the lives of our children. One by one, we can broaden our embrace. One by one we can protect our children. One by one we can make a difference in the lives of children that are troubled and troubling. One by one we can do as Jesus did and place children first. One by one we can lead a child to the kingdom.

Here are some additional things churches and individuals can do for all children who face challenges and difficulties. Think about the following...

We Can Pray More!



- The first thing we can do as a child advocate is to pray. Before we attempt anything else prayer must be the key.
- *Join other churches in committing yourself to be a part of intercessory prayer for children. A calendar listing a daily prayer emphasis will be available for the year 2002 by emailing sbabb@bgco.org or calling (405) 942-3800 ext. 648*

We Can Learn More!



- Learn the names of children in your church, get to know their families—provide opportunities for the adults in your church to know the children in your congregation.
 - Know what the issues are.
 - Help your church know about the needs of children in your church and community. Statistics are people with the tears washed off.
- Watch and read the news.
- Check out some of the resources on the next page.

We Can Do More!



- Volunteer to read to a child who is hospitalized or ill at home.
- Volunteer to tutor a child who is having difficulty in school.
- Contact the police department, a children's

hospital, or day care center and ask for ways you might be helpful to them.

- For every pair of shoes in your house, contribute \$1 to a local ministry which meets the needs of children.
- Write a note to a child telling them something you admire about them.
- Sponsor a clothes drive, book drive, or toy drive in your church.
- Encourage adults to volunteer their time working with a community agency—food program, homeless shelter, pregnancy crisis center, crisis nursery, etc.

Advocate More!



- Adopt a social worker in your community.
- Write letters to a congressional representative about children's issues.
- Register to vote and then remember to vote.
- Send a letter of encouragement to a person in your community who is involved in child advocacy.
- Speak out for children.

National and State Resources

RESOURCES IN OKLAHOMA

- **Family Ministries, BGCO**—Specialist, Dr. Kent Choate, 405/942-3000 ext. 649 or email kchoate@bgco.org. For a handbook of counselors in Oklahoma call Gayle, 405/942-3000 ext. 645 or email gwoodward@bgco.org.
- **Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children** 877/276-6242
- **Alcoholics Anonymous Hotline** (24 hours) 405/524-1100
- **Oklahoma Child Abuse Hotline** 405/713-6800
- **CONTACT** (24-Hour Suicide & Crisis Helpline, Information & Referral Services) 405/848-2278
- **Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OBSI):** 405/848-6724
- **Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control** 405/521-2885 or 800/522-8031
- **Child or Adult Abuse Hotline** (Statewide) 800/522-3511
- **Oklahoma City Crime Stoppers** 405/235-7300
- **REACH-OUT** (Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Domestic/Sexual Violence Hotline) 800/522-9054

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

- **Childrens Hospice International** 700 Princess Street, Lower Level Alexandria, VA, 703-684-0330

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (CONT.):

- **Childhelp USA National Headquarters** 6463 Independence Avenue Woodland Hills, CA 91367 818/347-7280
- **National Child Abuse Hotline** 800-4-A-CHILD. The Hotline is organized by Childhelp National Headquarters and have crisis intervention counselors 24/7.
- **The Centering Corporation** 1531 N. Saddle Creek Rd., Omaha, NE 68104 402/553-1200 This organization has a large number of resources for parents, teachers and children who are affected by the death of a loved one.
- **Missing & Exploited Children National Hotline** 800/843-5678
- **National Children's Cancer Society** 800/532-6459
- **National Hospice Organization** 1901 North Moore Street #901 Arlington, VA 22209 800/658-8898
- **SIDS Alliance** 1314 Bedford Avenue, Suite 210 Baltimore, MD 21208 800/221-SIDS This Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) organization has over 30 publications ranging in price from \$.20 to \$3.00 and have bulk prices available.

Resources for Dealing with Children in Crisis

Books



- Johann Christoph Arnold, **Endangered: Your Child in a Hostile World**, (Plough Publishing House, 2000).
- Debbie Barr, **Children of Divorce** (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).
- Gary Chapman & Ross Campbell, M.D., **The Five Languages of Love of Children**, (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 1997).
- Gary Chapman & Ross Campbell, M.D., **The Five Languages of Love of Teenagers** (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 1997).
- Karen Dockery, **When A Hug Won't Fix The Hurt: Walking With Your Child Through Crisis** (Birmingham: New Hope, 2000).
- Marian Wright Eldeman, **Guide My Feet** (Boston: Beacon press, 1965).
- David Elkind, **Ties That Stress** (Harvard University Press, 1994).
- David Elkind, **The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Soon Too Fast** (Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1981).
- David Elkind, **All Grown Up and No Place To Go: Teenagers in Crisis** (Addison Wesley Publishing, 1984).
- Helen Fitzgerald, **The Grieving Child, A Parent's Guide**, (New York, NY: A Fireside Book, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1992).
- Diana Garland, **Precious in His Sight** (Birmingham: New Hope, 1996).
- Diana Garland, **Child Advocacy Module**, (Woman's Missionary Union).
- Beth Goff, **Where Is Daddy? The Story of Divorce**, (Boson: Beacon Press, 1969) ISBN: 0-8070-2388-4.
- Linda Goldman, **Life & Loss: A Guide to Help Grieving Children**, (Levittown, Pennsylvania: Accelerated Development, Inc. 1994). ISBN 1-55959-052-1
- Sharon Greenlee, **When Some Dies**, (Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers, 1992).
- Amy Hatkoff & Karen Kelly Klopp, **How To Save the Children** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).
- John Hodge, **Finding Grandpa Everywhere: A Young Child Discovers Memories of a Grandparent**, Omaha Nebraska: Centering Corporation Resource, 1999).
- Theresa Huntley, **Helping Children Grieve: When Someone They Love Dies**, (Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 1991).
- Joy Johnson, **Children Die, Too**, (Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation, 1978).
- Andrew D. Lester, **Pastoral Care With Children in Crisis** (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985).
- Karen Miller, **The Crisis Manual for Early Childhood Teachers: How to Handle the Really Difficult Problems**, Gryphon House, 1996.
- Joy D. Osofsky and Emily Fenichel, **Caring for Infants and Toddlers in Violent Environments: Hurt, Healing, and Hope**, (Arlington, Va. Zero to Three National Center for Clinical Infant Program, 1994).
- Cindy Pitts, **Good News For Kids: The Power to Change Lives** (LifeWay Christian Resources).
- Max Price, **Children in Crisis: Helping Children Cope brochures** (LifeWay Christian Resources).
- Rhonda R. Reeves, **200+ Ways to Care For Preschoolers** (Birmingham: New Hope, 1997).
- Fred Rogers and Barry Head, **Mister Rogers Talks With Parents**, (Winona, MN Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, 1993).
- Fred Rogers and Hedda Sharapan, **Talking with Young Children About Death: A Message from Fred Rogers**. Pittsburgh, PA: Family Communications, Inc. Order from Family Communications, 4802 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213. 412/687-2990 for \$.50 each or purchase in bulk.
- Alison Salloum, **Reactions: workbook to help young people who are experiencing trauma and grief** (Omaha, Nebraska: Centering Corporation, 1998) ISBN: 1-56123-108-8
- Dan Schaefer and Christine Lyons, **How Do We Tell the Children?: A Step-by-Step Guide for Helping Children Two to Teen Cope When Someone Dies** (New York: New Market Press, 1993).
- William Sears, **ParentProject: Tools For Godly Parenting** (LifeWay Christian Resources).
- Judith S. Wallerstein, Julia M. Lewis, Sandra Blakelee, **The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study**, (Hyperion, 2000).
- Children's Defense Fund (CDF), **The State of America's Children** (Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 2001).
- **A Teacher's Guide To The Grieving Student: Guidelines and Suggestions for School Personnel Grades K-12**, (Lancaster PA: Hospice of Lancaster County, 685 Good Drive, Lancaster, PA 17601 (717) 295-3900.
- **BabyLife Magazine** (LifeWay).
- **Between Friends Series** (Birmingham: New Hope).
- **Building Strong Families** (LifeWay).
- **Helping Children Cope: A Guide to Helping Children Cope With the Stress of the Oklahoma City Explosion**, American Psychology Association, Practice Directorate, (750 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20002. 202-336-5859).
- **Making Wise Choices**, (Birmingham: New Hope, 1995).
- **Parenting by Grace: Discipline & Spiritual Growth**, (LifeWay).
- **ParentLife Magazine** (LifeWay).
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Children**, (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, Inc.)
- **Tackling Tough Issues**, (Birmingham: New Hope, 1999).

VIDEOS

- **Scared Silent** (1992)
Hosted by Oprah Winfrey this video profiles six true stories.
- **Reducing the Risk**, Christian Ministry Resources. A guide for churches.



WEBSITES

- Center for the Improvement of Child Caring—www.CICC.parenting.org
- Children's Magazine—www.FamilyEducation.com
- International Network of Children's Ministry—www.incm.org
- Family Education—www.FamilyEducation.com
- LifeWay Christian Resources—www.lifeway.com
- Parent Smart—www.ParentSmart.com



WE PRAY FOR CHILDREN

We pray for children

**who sneak popsicles before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.**

And we pray for those

**who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,
who never "counted potatoes,"
who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.**

We pray for children

**who never get dessert,
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
who watch their parents watch them die,
who can't find any bread to steal,
who don't have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
whose monsters are real.**

We pray for children

**who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,
who like ghost stories,
who shove dirty clothes under the bed, and never rinse out the tub,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
who squirm in church and scream in the phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and
whose smiles can make us cry.**

And we pray for those

**whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move, but have no being.**

**We pray for children who want to be carried
and for those who must,**

**for those we never give up on and for those
who don't get a second chance.**

**For those we smother...and for those who will grab
the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.**

Please offer your hands to them so that no child is left behind because we did not act. —Ina J. Hughes

Arm in arm with a hurting child walk along beside him through his crisis. Show God's love through the love and acceptance you extend to him. Tell him about God and how much He loves him. —Sheri Babb