

# INTRODUCTION

Many of us believe that children are our future. Children are the church's future. Therefore, the church, parents, and teachers have the responsibility to nurture and train them to become strong *future* members and leaders. However, are we merely waiting for the future? How about the present? Should we not begin our training now instead of pressing the *Pause* button on children?



*“Let the little children come...”*

In fact, research shows the urgency of investing our time, effort, and money in children right now rather than at some future time. The recent Barna Research Group<sup>1</sup> reports that 32 percent of those who made a decision to accept Jesus do so between the ages of 5 and 12; 4 percent for those in the 13-18 age range; and 6 percent for people 19 or older. In other words, if people do not accept Jesus as their Savior before they reach their teenage years, the chance of accepting Him later is very slim.

The importance of engaging children in this process of decision-making in their formative years is crucial to building a strong church today. We believe that building tomorrow's church begins with today's children!

Therefore, this handbook serves as a training manual to equip Children's Ministries directors and leaders on the division, union, conference, and mission levels of the church in their ministry to children. It contains ideas, suggestions, and resources for developing and nurturing the faith of children and discipling them to become spiritual champions.

However, this resource is not limited, by all means, for directors only, but it is also a useful tool for anyone who have a passion for children and who are involved with God in shaping the spiritual destinies of children. More copies of this handbook can be obtained from the General Conference Children's Ministries Department.

<sup>1</sup>Barna, George. *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2003.