

Capturing the Hearts of Boys and Girls

Subtitle: What role does gender play in discipleship and how does it impact ministry?

Overview: Many people have focused over the years on learning modalities, creative presentation techniques, classroom setup, and discipline as a means to ensure maximum learning is taking place. However, little research has been done on the impact of gender — until recently. This session will outline the different needs and opportunities that each gender has and how the church is uniquely positioned to meet those needs.

Objective: To help children's leaders understand the differences between the genders, the unique opportunities and challenges that each gender faces in our society, and how best to create a ministry environment to help these young boys and girls mature into godly men and women.

Icon Definitions

-  Advance to a new slide in presentation.
-  Allow Discussion - Many of these can be done using a "Pair Share" where you encourage participants to talk with a neighbor to share their insights. After a set period of time (often about 45-90 seconds depending on the number of people and the type of question), the facilitator can use reflective listening to capture responses.

→ Title Slide

INTRODUCTION:

Over the years churches have adjusted their approach to discipleship to ensure kids are not only hearing the stories of the Bible, but also opening their hearts to allow the Holy Spirit to transform them from the inside.

As new research and teaching methodologies have emerged, the church often responds by implementing those elements to remain relevant while keeping the core gospel message in tact. These methodologies include learning styles, memorization techniques, and more.

One of the areas researchers and teachers are discovering is the role that gender plays in the learning and life-transformation process.

Children's ministries that make use of learning styles age-appropriate actives are more effective than those that don't. In the same way, churches leaders who understand and build programming based on gender differences can have a higher level of effectiveness at the approach to discipleship and mentorship of children to mature adults.

GET THEM THINKING:

I would like to have you get together in small groups (around tables or in clusters where they are seated. Groups of three to four work the best) to discuss the following question. I'm going to provide you with about 1 minute to get some thoughts from everyone in your group.

→ **ASK:** As you look at boys you know, what are some attributes you see in them that are different from girls? How do they approach life? How do they learn? (*Use Pair Share*)

After about one minute, go around the room to get some responses from several of the groups. Be sure to use reflective listening¹ as a means to reinforce the key thoughts.

→ **ASK:** As you consider girls you know, what are some attributes you see in them that are different from boys? How do they approach life? How do they learn? (*Use Pair Share*)

After about one minute go around the room to get some responses from several of the groups. Be sure to use reflective listening as a means to reinforce the key thoughts.

¹ Reflective listening is when the presenter repeats back what the student said in a summary fashion but using some of the student's own words. This should be short. Avoid adding your own commentary to the summary as this can sabotage the time for the rest of the presentation.

④ ONE OBVIOUS DIFFERENCE:

When I think of the difference between boys and girls, one specific thought comes to mind.

When a girl goes to brush her teeth and the toothpaste falls off, she is more likely to put some new toothpaste on the brush. When the boy's toothpaste falls off, he is more likely to scoop it out of the sink and use it anyway.

TRANSITION:

I think we would all agree that when God made man and woman and called it "very good," He fully understood all of the differences and uniquenesses about them. As we look at gender differences, we must be cautious not to fall into the trap of thinking that one gender is superior over the other.

While they both have their strengths and weaknesses, it is these differences that God blessed. We may find certain teaching and training techniques as being more aligned with our personality or understanding of growth, but both male and female are valued and precious in His sight.

We must never get into the mode of demeaning a gender out of frustration with comments that are hurtful. These can cause damage that the child will carry with them for years.

It is my hope today that the content of this session will help you better know how to create environments where you can disciple and mentor boys and girls how God designed them.

④ **Slide Quote: *To capture the hearts of Boys and Girls we must understand their God-given uniqueness.***

④ WHAT IS “GENDER-SPECIFIC?”

Before we get into the reasons why every children's ministry should have a gender specific approach to discipling the next generation, I want to take a minute to help you understand what gender-specific ministry it.

First. Gender-Specific is a MIND-SET.

Leaders and parents should have an understanding that it's okay to approach discipleship and mentoring different for boys and girls. They know how boys and girls interact and learn differently. They will see the benefits from having times where boys and girls are separated by gender as well as times they are combined.

Second. Gender-Specific is an ENVIRONMENT.

Although some programming for genders can be accomplished in a coed environment, it is critical at some point that the genders be separated for times with leaders of the same gender. This is the time when the content and programming can be made specific for that gender. Activities and objectives can all be customized for each gender.

④ FIVE REASONS FOR A GENDER-SPECIFIC APPROACH

It's important to understand that a ministry that captures the hearts of boys and girls must consider a gender-specific approach to reach maximum effectiveness. This is not to say that coed times do not

have their place, but the evidence is very strong that each gender will flourish when they are placed into an environment that is tailored for them.

Here are the top five reasons for a gender-specific approach to ministry.

→ **1. Unique Concerns for Boys and Girls²**

NOTE: If possible, acquire stats for your state/region/city regarding children's mental health, academic performance, and sexual activity. Local stats may be more compelling to the decision makers as they determine if gender-specific ministries are worth the resources invested.

→ **Unique Concerns for Boys:**

1. Suicide rates in boys are about 3.5 times higher than in girls.
2. Adolescent boys are more likely to be victims of almost all types of serious violent crimes (e.g., assault, robbery, homicide).
3. Boys are suffering in school (e.g., poor grades, lower graduation rates, lower college attendance).
4. Boys who don't do well in school will struggle in life (non HS graduates are less likely to have a steady job and get married, more likely to get a divorce).

→ **Unique Concerns for Girls:**

1. More likely to experience depression.
2. Forty percent of date rape victims are between 14 and 17 years old.
3. Eating disorders are now the third most chronic illness in adolescent girls.
4. One in three girls has had sex by the age of 16; two out of three by the age of 18.

Churches that have the mind-set and environment where these issues are understood and addressed through God's Word and relationship can make a significant impact on helping boys and girls thrive within our sin-wrecked culture.

→ **2. Diminished Role Models**

Girls: In the absence of girls ministry, girls have less female role models within the church because there are often more male pastors than female pastors. A gender-specific ministry ensures girls have the opportunity to see women in leadership roles.

Boys: Have less role models both at home and in school, fewer male school teachers (1981 = 18%, today = 9%), and a majority of volunteer teachers in the local church are women. By establishing a gender-specific ministry, boys are assured the presence of a godly male role model who will mentor and disciple them.

² National Institute of Mental Health, Science Writing, Press & Dissemination Branch. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/Findings1/brief.pdf>

US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health-publications/depression-in-children-and-adolescents/depression-in-children-and-adolescents_140864.pdf

Girls Ministry Handbook (listed on the resources slide)

3. Boys and Girls Learn Differently

Deborah Bullock created a simple acronym that describes how boys and girls learn differently.

BOYS Learning Attributes

B - Becoming Competent

This could be related to confidence. No boy/man wants to fail at anything. Part of the learning environment for boys should be crafted around helping them know that they have the potential to be successful at what is being taught.

O - Order

Don't confuse order with peace and quiet. Instead order is very similar to consistency. Knowing that the leaders can be counted on, that they will be protected and cared for is critical. If a bully shows up, will they dominate the class?

Y - Yelling and Running

If you have something important to say to a boy the worst way to communicate it is by saying, "Sit down and look me in the eye, what I have to share with you is very important." Rather, conversation will come more readily if there is action involved. Consider allowing them to play a game and then use some questions to process a truth based on the experience from the game. Frequent movement helps boys' brains remain active.

S - Stretching Beyond

Boys have been labeled as lazy because of their affinity for video games. However, boys want to be stretched, they want to be a part of something bigger. Often the appeal of video games is so strong because the story of real life has not captured and engaged them to become the hero and champion they long to be. Create environments where boys can practice being the hero.

GIRLS Learning Attributes

G - Greater Sensory Intake

Learning environments where touch, taste, and sight are immersive to reinforce the content will help girls thrive.

I - Inductive Thinking

When leaders challenge girls to think of specific examples, it will help them learn the general principles of the associated topic. Likewise, it is important to provide specific examples to illustrate the general principles being taught.

R - Real Life Application

Group projects where opportunities are provided for girls to live out what they learn is important. If you teach about compassion, consider discussing opportunities for the groups to show compassion in the near future.

L - Love and Acceptance

It's important that every girl feel love and acceptance. There can be no place for condescending talk, bullying, or allowing girls to be marginalized. Care must be taken to create a safe environment for expression. Until a teacher has reached a girl's heart, the teacher will have little impact on her mind and soul.

S - Speaking

Girls want to talk. Be sure to allow them to process verbally. If the group is large, you may want to consider allowing them to be placed in smaller groups where more girls can talk at a time. This helps those who are shy to speak up and those who are dominant not to overpower the entire room.

Since boys and girls learn differently, both genders may not learn optimally in a coed environment. This is an important consideration as many churches have less time to disciple children due to eliminating mid week services and Sunday School. Since churches may only have one contact with children each week, this time needs to be maximized for most effective teaching.

NOTE: All of the techniques can be used for either gender to heighten the “stickiness” of the lesson. This content is designed to show gender preferences.

④ **4. Separate Topics and Approach to Mentoring**

Coed settings are not sufficient for addressing the concerns noted in boys and girls-sexual and emotional issues. These topics are often ignored, as they are not appropriate in coed settings.

Mentoring relationships are not fostered effectively without small groups *and* gender specific settings.

- ④ • **Separate Topics for Girls** generally center around self-value, self-image and interpersonal relationships.
- **Separate Topics for Boys** generally center around issues related to authority and maturing into a godly man.

④ **Topics for Boys and Girls**

Girls		Boys
Self Worth In Christ	Body Image	Social Maturity
Loving Future Husband	Loving Future Children	Showing respect for authority
Purity	Becoming a Homemaker	Earning respect when in authority
Risk-Taking	Developing Leadership	Model heroic behaviors, ideas, and stories that demonstrate godly manhood
Avoiding bossiness and manipulation	Knowing How to Disagree with Someone	Conflict Resolution and Communication Training
Expressing and Receiving Encouragement	Manage emotions so they are stronger and less directed by emotions	Developing Empathy-may be most effective in leading boys away from violence and toward an understanding of what it means to be a godly man.
Emotional Health within relationships – bullying, relational aggression, high need for control, submitting to authority		

→ 5. Classroom Management Benefits

These benefits have already been documented in single gender classrooms within the public school systems. The church could also see these benefits in our discipleship efforts through gender-specific ministries.

One word of caution: the reason for implementing a gender-specific ministry must not be driven by separating one disruptive gender from the equation. This often results in seeing some benefit because of the single-gender environment. But unless the leadership maximizes the mentality and the environment of a gender-specific setting the full benefits will not be realized.

The following are some of the classroom benefits that will be experienced.

→ Classroom Benefits

Reduced Distractions: flirting, sexual tension (yes even in kids), gender-based competitions will be reduced or eliminated. This results in increased ability to focus and concentrate.

Open Discussion: Both genders are more open to discussing personal issues in a gender-specific environment. This allows leaders to spot and address potentially damaging issues earlier in life.

Stronger Mentoring Relationships: When men and boys/women and girls interact, they have the ability to foster stronger relationships as God intended. In our world of gender confusion, boys must see living examples of godly men whom they respect. In the same manner, girls should be aspiring to model their lives after the godly women in their life.

Camaraderie Built: When boys have a connection with one another the positive peer pressure can assist the classroom environment.

Response Time Equalized: Studies show that girls are often called on more frequently than boys to answer questions because they are able to process the question and response more quickly. In a gender specific environment both boys and girls will have an equal opportunity to respond to the teachers questions.

→ Five Reasons for a Gender Specific Approach to Ministry (review slide)

Ask: Which of these five reasons for a gender specific approach to ministry will be the quickest for your church to implement. (Use Pair Share)

1. Unique Concerns for Boys and Girls
2. Diminished Role Models
3. Boys and Girls Learn Differently
4. Separate Topics and Approach to Mentoring
5. Classroom Management Benefits

→ SIX COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE GENDER-SPECIFIC MINISTRY

→ 1. Discipleship and Leadership Training for Leaders

In order to be effective in gender-specific ministry, church leaders must understand the role of ongoing training for those who serve.

→ As a rule of thumb 90 percent of the training should be focused on spiritual growth of the leader and current struggles children face. The remaining 10 percent center around how the program works and continued development of the program.

Other topics of importance include role modeling, accountability, bonding, and the current discipleship pathway.

We must understand that as early as high school all the way through adulthood people should be taught the importance of discipleship of the next generation.

A church will find that using a wide variety of delivery formats is beneficial.

→ 2. Small groups

→ A mentor relationship can only be formed in small groups and mentoring is a necessary outcome of boys and girls ministry.

Small groups facilitate unique environments.

- Boys need an active environment.
- Girls need plenty of conversation.

Some aspects of discipleship can only occur in small groups: Answering and asking questions, accountability, feeling of belonging.

→ 3. Current and Relevant

Although all church ministries should strive to remain relevant to the culture in which they minister, those working in a gender-specific environment have a unique opportunity. Often boys and girls will respond differently to current issues that are taking place. As a result, discipleship content, imagery, activities, etc. can take on a different form than in combined settings.

→ Post-moderns are image driven so branding and appealing current graphics are important.

The “what” is more important to boys than girls.

- Girls highly value relationships and the opportunity to communicate so simply being together meets girls’ needs.
- Boys care about what is being taught. Relevance of content is very important in boys ministry.

Awareness of current issues and how to provide godly counsel for those issues.

Leaders utilize updated methodologies and technology.

4. Events

Events can serve multiple purposes within a church-based, gender-specific ministry.

→ **Create Momentum:**

The promotion and planning of events creates excitement about the ministry. When done well, the adults and kids experience a win that creates a desire for more. These events are great opportunities to help kids understand that faith can be fun.

Build Teams:

As children, youth and adults are included in the preparation for the events it helps them feel a part of something bigger. Consider using the leaders or the participants themselves to assist in the planning, deciding, or promotion of the different events. This not only gives them a great sense of ownership, when done as part of the ministry it provides additional opportunities for growth.

Contribute to Church Growth

One of the key focuses of any event should be the opportunity for people to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. These are also great opportunities to begin bringing people into the life of the church.

→ **5. Numerous Stakeholders**

As the number of key stakeholders in the church increases, so does the ease of which participation and the longevity of effectiveness.

However, it is not enough that a large number of parents be the only people who are passionate about a gender-specific ministry. Church leadership should be the chief champions of the gender-specific ministry approach.

→ Some examples of these leaders include

- lead pastor and spouse,
- youth pastor,
- children's pastor,
- and men's and women's ministry directors.
- When parents also see the value of a gender-specific ministry the support for events and leaders increases.

Communication between ministry leaders and key stakeholders is critical to ensure long-term success.

→ **6. Holistic**

Church leaders should be cautioned about falling into a rut of activity that begins to limit their effectiveness of mentoring and discipleship. A strong gender-specific ministry understands that children grow in many ways and when the church meets those needs in a holistic approach the chances increase for becoming a lifelong follower of Christ.

→ **Kids grow;**

Spiritually - Know that God has a plan for his/her life. Develop a personal relationship with God.

Relationally - Experience a sense of family. Fill the need for godly role models. Healthy peer relations.

Intellectually - Know the truth of God's Word. Be challenged intellectually.

Emotionally - Be guided through the unique challenges of manhood/womanhood.

Physically - Being comfortable in who God made them as their body changes.

→ The following chart demonstrates some of the characteristics of effective curricula that is designed for a gender-specific environment.

Characteristics of Effective Curriculum

Both	Girls	Boys
Support Church Culture	Encouragement	Rite of Passage Experiences
Strong Communication with Stakeholders	Role-Modeling	Focus on Movement and Space
User Friendly	Communication Oriented	Use of Humor
Allows for Self-Direction	Variety in Teaching Modes	Competition Opportunities
Vertical and Horizontal Mentorship	Technology	Experiential and Minimal Verbal Directions
Postmodern Values		Model heroic behaviors, and godly manhood
Developed by current practitioners, discipleship experts, and educators		Leaders Carry Powerful Authority

→ TAKE THE NEXT STEPS:

1. **Speak to the future:** Encourage your leaders to speak to what boys and girls need to be successful as adults. When addressing behavior, knowledge, and attitude create connections to their preferred future as a godly man or woman.
2. **Train Your Leaders:** Help leaders understand that
 1. It's okay for boys to be a bit louder and encourage them to find activities that reinforce the lesson that don't require a lot of "sit and listen to me-this is important." Boys will do better having the teaching while they are doing something.
 2. Girls love to discuss, but they also enjoy role-playing. Create opportunities for them to creatively tell a story through costume and characters. This helps their minds to process and understand the concepts.
3. **Intentional Gender Models:** It is critical that men be living examples of what the boys should become and women be living examples of what the girls should become. No curriculum will ever replace the impact of a godly role model living through life's successes and failures while keeping the faith.
4. **Encourage longevity:** Kids have enough people walking out on them. Your leaders should understand their commitment is not to teach a class but to shape the life of a boy and a girl. They need to be willing to pastor the children in their group all week long, not just during class time.
5. **Appropriate Resources:** Leading any ministry within the local church can be overwhelming. Churches that utilize a curriculum that is based on the knowledge that you now have will save you time and energy allowing you and your leaders to focus on the relationships with the boys and girls. We recommend the following:
 1. Royal Rangers - www.royalrangers.com
 2. Mpact Clubs - www.ministry4girls.com (Also known as National Girls Ministries)

 **My Healthy Church Copyright Slide**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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