

Don't just *say* you care.

Prove Your Love!

Great, you're back. Are you ready to go "inside"? Good! But there are a few things you should know. First, this is not going to be a sightseeing tour of inner-city ministry. Second, ministering to city kids is real and risky but it places you where God is at work. (*Read Psalm 107:23-24.*) Third, we are going to school—a type of urban ministry boot camp!

Lesson #1

God is good in *the hood*—the inner-city neighborhood. Many kids and their families who live in inner-city neighborhoods are aware they have extreme problems. They wish things were different. Many of these families respect God's Word and believe in prayer. They respond to Christians who bring them help and hope. Often their response is temporary. But yours must never be.

Lesson #2

If you care enough to take the love of Christ inside you will have to prove it by loving city kids and their families. In the book *Grace Matters*, Lem Tucker says, "He who has the greatest truth must have the greatest love, which is the greatest proof." You must prove your love over and over for others to know you really care. Many well-meaning Christians have done great harm in the city by making promises to kids then leaving and never returning. If you love city kids you must keep your word.

Lesson #3

Your primary focus will be to build personal and ministry relationships. These relationships take time to develop and must be biblically based on equality, grace, trust and endurance. This is accomplished by visiting children in their own neighborhood. Soon your consistent presence will prove to their families that you care.

Lesson #4

Large, effective ministries to urban kids have learned that in order to impact children you must visit them.

- Visits connect you with the child’s world—“You’re not afraid.”
- Eighty percent of the children who attend your events come because you visited—“You let me know.”
- Visits expand your personal ministry to each child—“You care about me.”
- Visits project an image/testimony in the community—“Thank you for helping my kids.”

Spencer got a home visit every week. Soon he and his sister started attending Extra Good News, an inner-city Bible club in Durham, North Carolina. The faithfulness of his bus commander to visit, encourage and pray with the family led to Spencer becoming a teen helper, an active church member and later a summer missionary. Today Spencer desires a life in full-time Christian ministry.

Lesson #5

Try these proven guidelines to successful visiting:

- Set a time every week to visit—your program should revolve around weekly visitation.
- Use a block-by-block approach to reach more kids.
- Keep a record of information on each child and his family.
- Visit every kid but spend extended time with selected individuals.
- Be prepared to share the Gospel, listen or lend a helping hand.
- Pray for children, parents and family needs.

Because a children’s worker followed this plan for weekly visitation, Nikki received help when she said, “My mom is always angry, I don’t know what to do.” Jade, a ten-year-old, had a heavy burden after watching the video *Left Behind*. She told her teacher, “I don’t want my mom to be left behind. Will you come tell her what you told me about Jesus?”

Floodgates for ministry burst wide open when you visit. Will you add regular home contacts to your children’s ministry? If so, you’ll take your game to another level.

I’ll meet you again on “the inside.”