

YOUR INDISPENSABLE GUIDE

Children's Ministry

20
25

DIRECTORY

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directory
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- Sunday school curriculum
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Children's Ministry

2025 DIRECTORY

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Gear up for another year of amazing children's ministry!

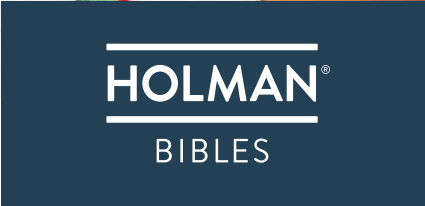
Within these pages, you'll discover the best new and exciting resources from our trusted ministry partners. Whether you're looking for curriculum, Bibles, vacation Bible school, or other tools to resource your children's ministry, here you'll find an array of quality options and best practices from the ministry experts you rely on.

May God richly bless your ministry to children in 2025.

Your friends,
The Editors
Outreach magazine

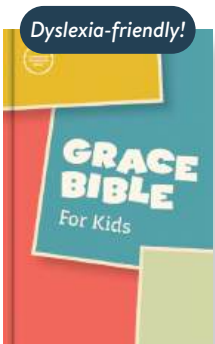


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CHOOSE TO CHANGE Read Genesis 3:1-18

The man blamed God for making the woman who gave him the forbidden fruit to eat. What would you do if you got caught eating cookies meant for a classroom party?

- Tell the teacher to stop putting cookies where you can reach them.
- Apologize and stop eating the cookies.
- Tell at the baker for making the cookies too yummy.

Answer B, because it's best to tell the truth and take responsibility.

Key Verse Challenge
GENESIS 1:1

Write this verse on a piece of poster board. Then sketch, paint, or doodle images that remind you of God's creation. You could make a nature scene, draw your favorite animal, or sketch a picture of someone you love. Do this on your own, or ask others to help you, and find a place to display it for all to see!

FACTOID

Ziggu-what?
The tower of Babel was a ziggurat. That's a funny-sounding word for an interesting pyramid-shaped structure made of thousands of mud bricks with staircases along the outside and a temple at the top. Let's hope they had a railing on there!



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5 CULTURAL SHIFTS AND EMERGING TRENDS

Children's ministry leaders face a rapidly evolving landscape shaped by cultural and societal changes triggered over the past several years, including incredible cultural division, economic challenges, and a global pandemic. The year ahead will demand adaptability, innovation, and a deep understanding of the shifting needs of families and children. Here's a glimpse of what this year may hold for your ministry, including key cultural trends, technological advancements, and practical strategies for staying ahead.

1. DIGITAL EVOLUTION

Generation Alpha—those born from 2010 onward—will be the primary age group attending children's ministries. This cohort is growing up with advanced technology integrated into their daily lives. According to a 2023 report from Common Sense Media, 53% of children aged 6-8 use a smartphone daily, and 45% engage with digital media for more than three hours a day.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING Children's ministries need to continue to seek out ways to integrate technology into their programs to engage this digital-savvy generation effectively. This includes developing interactive digital content, such as Bible apps with gamified elements, virtual reality (VR) experiences for biblical storytelling, and secure, online communities (or the metaverse) where children can participate in faith-based activities and discussions. You can find tools to help with most of these ventures for free online.

2. MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Mental health continues to be a significant focus since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with growing recognition of its importance in children's overall development and well-being. The National Institute of Mental Health reported a 25% increase in anxiety and depression among children and adolescents between 2016 and 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, highlighting the need for supportive interventions and environments where mental health is safeguarded.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING Find ways to incorporate mental health and emotional well-being best practices into your programming and volunteer training. This can include training team members to recognize signs of mental health issues, integrating emotional resilience practices into lessons, and providing resources for parents on managing stress and supporting their children's mental health. For instance, some churches are introducing programs that combine biblical teachings with emotional intelligence training, helping children develop coping skills and resilience.

3. INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

The American cultural landscape is becoming increasingly ethnically and socially diverse and will continue on this trajectory. According to the Pew Research Center, 20% of children in the U.S. are from multiracial

backgrounds, and 28% belong to non-Christian faith traditions. This trend is expected to continue, with increasing representation of various cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING A ministry that embraces inclusivity and diversity more proactively will be a stronger, more effective ministry. This includes ensuring that ministry curriculum and activities are inviting and inclusive, that your team is trained to welcome children from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and that you intentionally create an environment where all children feel seen and valued and where Jesus is at the forefront of all you do.

4. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Family structures and dynamics continue to evolve, with a rise in single-

parent households, blended families, and varying family models. The U.S. Census Bureau notes that about 27% of children live with a single parent, and 16% live in blended families.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING Children's ministries everywhere have worked to address the needs of diverse family structures, and this need is only increasing. This may include providing resources and programs that cater to single parents and blended families, such as parenting workshops, family counseling, and inclusive activities that accommodate different family models. It may mean offering flexible family support groups that address parenting challenges and providing community-building opportunities for families. However it looks in your setting, family-centered ministry is key to a thriving ministry and church.

5. NEW EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

The traditional classroom model is giving way to more interactive and

experiential learning methods. According to a 2023 study by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 70% of educators believe that project-based and hands-on learning approaches are more effective in engaging children than traditional lecture-style teaching experiences.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING More interactive and experiential learning strategies are central to an effective educational experience for kids. This includes creating hands-on activities, project-based lessons, and using technology to facilitate interactive learning experiences. It means letting kids guide their own learning at times, including allowing them to select what types of activities they want to participate in and offering more opportunities for group interactions. It also means recognizing different learning styles and weaving them into your classroom programming.

As we look ahead to a new year, we face an exciting array of opportunities and challenges in keeping our children's ministries safe, smart, and savvy. Embracing digital transformation, addressing mental health needs, promoting inclusivity and diversity, supporting diverse family structures, and adapting to new educational approaches will all be crucial for relevant and effective ministry.

By proactively addressing these trends and adapting strategies accordingly, children's ministries can create a vibrant, engaging, and supportive environment that meets the evolving needs of children and families growing in their faith in Jesus.



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BEYOND BASIC TRAINING

Kids' needs are complex and different now than just a few years ago. Focus your team on advanced training for maximum effectiveness.

Well-trained volunteers are the backbone of any thriving kidmin program—and in a post-pandemic, divided, and often turbulent world, it's critical that volunteers are equipped to be the presence kids need. Here are 7 key areas of advanced training that will elevate your team's ability to engage with children more meaningfully and effectively.

Emphasize emotional intelligence (EI) training.

Beyond basic interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence (EI) is crucial for managing diverse behaviors and fostering a supportive environment with children. Train your volunteers in recognizing and responding appropriately to children's emotions. Techniques such as role-playing different scenarios can help volunteers practice empathetic responses and develop better emotional regulation. Resources like books or workshops on EI tailored to children's needs can also provide deeper insights into building strong emotional connections between volunteers and the children they serve.

Utilize reflective practice for continuous improvement.

Encourage volunteers to engage in reflective practice by setting aside time for regular self-assessment and peer feedback. After each quarter, event, or initiative, facilitate a structured reflection where volunteers frankly discuss what worked, what didn't, and areas

for improvement. This method helps in identifying personal strengths and areas for growth, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and self-awareness.

Implement scenario-based training.

Move beyond theoretical training by using scenario-based training to simulate real-life situations. Develop complex scenarios that volunteers might face, such as managing a group of children with varying needs or handling a conflict between children. By role-playing these scenarios, volunteers can practice problem-solving and decision-making skills in a controlled environment, leading to better preparedness when facing actual challenges.

Focus on non-verbal communication skills.

Effective communication with children involves more than just words. Train your volunteers to be aware of their non-verbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of

voice. Activities that involve interpreting and responding to different non-verbal signals can enhance volunteers' ability to communicate effectively and create a welcoming atmosphere.

Incorporate trauma-informed care practices.

Understanding trauma and its impact on children's behavior is crucial for effective ministry. Train volunteers in trauma-informed care practices, which emphasize creating a safe and supportive environment for children who may have experienced trauma. Provide training on recognizing signs of trauma, responding to trauma-related behaviors, and implementing strategies to support affected children while maintaining a focus on their strengths and resilience.

Integrate peer mentoring and coaching.

Develop a peer mentoring and coaching system where experienced volunteers mentor newer or less experienced team members. This approach allows for knowledge transfer and provides ongoing support. Create structured mentoring relationships with clear goals and regular check-ins to ensure that new

volunteers receive practical guidance and feedback, enhancing their confidence and competence.

Create a personalized development plan for each volunteer.

Develop personalized development plans for each volunteer to address their specific strengths, interests, and areas for growth. Conduct one-on-one meetings to set goals, discuss development opportunities, and create a tailored plan that includes targeted training, mentorship, and hands-on experiences. Regularly review and update these plans to ensure that volunteers continue to grow and contribute effectively.

Training volunteers in children's ministry goes beyond standard procedures; it involves cultivating advanced skills and fostering an environment of continuous growth and reflection. Implementing advanced strategies will not only improve your volunteers' interactions with children but also create a more dynamic, responsive, and supportive ministry environment. As leaders, investing time and resources in these training areas will ultimately lead to a more impactful and meaningful experience for all the children you serve.



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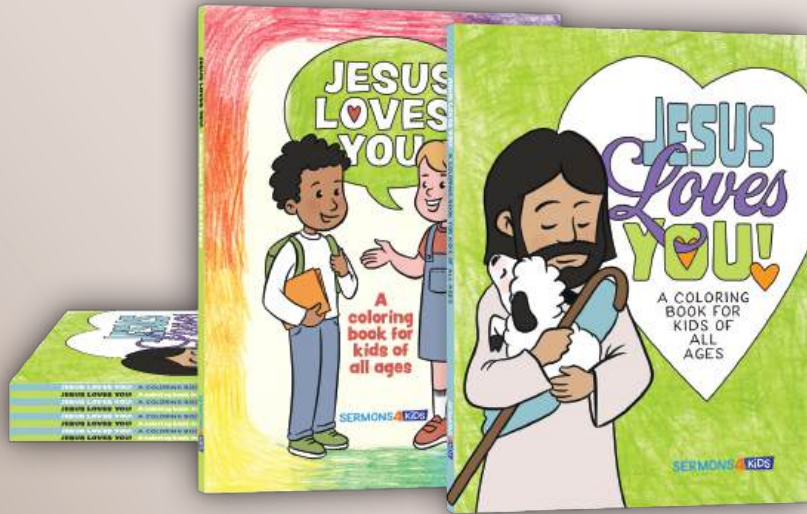
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A FAMILY / DIVIDED

A Post-Election Christian Approach to Healing

As we move past a chaotic and divisive election year, it's important for children's ministry leaders to guide families with compassion and care. A charged political climate can often lead to heightened emotions, divisions, and stress within our faith communities. As a leader, your role extends beyond teaching children about faith; it includes nurturing a spirit of unity, healing, and love. Here's how to create an environment of healing and caring for the families you serve.

Foster a Spirit of Unity and Inclusion.

The community may feel divided, but the church can be a beacon of unity. Start by promoting inclusivity within your children's ministry. Encourage discussions about empathy, understanding, and respect for differing viewpoints. Emphasize biblical principles that advocate for love and acceptance, such as 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." Create activities that highlight the importance of coming together despite our differences.

Lead by Example in Conflict Resolution.

Children learn by observing the behavior of adults. As a leader, model how to handle conflicts with grace and respect. Demonstrate active listening and constructive dialogue in meetings and interactions. Show children how to navigate disagreements while maintaining respect and kindness. For instance, use Bible passages that illustrate conflict resolution and the importance of forgiveness, such as the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Create Safe Spaces for Dialogue.

Establish safe spaces within your ministry where families can discuss their concerns and viewpoints without fear of judgment or retribution. Facilitate conversations that allow individuals to share their experiences and feelings openly. These spaces should be grounded in the principle of mutual respect, as outlined in James 1:19, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."

Encourage Acts of Service and Community Engagement.

Channel unruly energy and emotions into positive action. Organize community service projects and outreach programs that address local needs. By focusing on serving others, families can shift their attention from political divisions to collective efforts that benefit the community. This approach aligns with Galatians 5:13, which encourages believers to "serve one another humbly in love."

Promote Biblical Teachings on Peace and Forgiveness.

Reinforce the teachings of peace and forgiveness found in the Bible.

Incorporate lessons that emphasize Jesus' message of reconciliation and the importance of loving one's neighbor. Focus on passages like Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Encourage families to practice these teachings in their daily lives and interactions.

Focus on Shared Values.

Highlight the core values that unite us as a Christian community rather than political opinions that divide us. Focus on common ground such as faith, family, and service to others. Develop programs and activities that celebrate these shared values, fostering a sense of unity and belonging. For example, organize family-oriented events that emphasize teamwork and collaboration, reinforcing the idea that we are stronger together.

Encourage Personal Reflection and Growth

Invite families to engage in personal reflection and spiritual growth. Provide tools such as devotionals, reflection guides, or journaling prompts that help individuals process their emotions and grow spiritually. Encourage participation in Bible studies or small groups focused on building personal faith and understanding, fostering a deeper connection with God and each other.

By implementing these strategies, you and the families you serve can foster a nurturing environment that promotes healing, unity, and compassion within your church community, reflecting the love and teachings of Christ in every interaction.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO HEAL DIVIDES WITHIN YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

Create Common Goals Focus on shared missions or goals that unite the congregation, such as community service projects or charitable initiatives.

Encourage Active Listening Train members in active listening techniques to ensure that everyone feels heard and understood during discussions.

Offer Mediation Provide access to conflict resolution for members experiencing significant disagreements.

Promote Positive Communication Encourage the use of positive and constructive language in all communications, both within the church and in external interactions.

Foster a Culture of Forgiveness Regularly emphasize the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation through sermons, teachings, and church activities.

Celebrate Unity Organize events that celebrate the unity and diversity within the church community, such as movie nights or seasonal potlucks that are only focused on bringing people together.

Provide Ongoing Education Offer workshops or seminars on topics related to conflict resolution, diversity, and emotional intelligence to equip members with the skills needed to navigate differences effectively.

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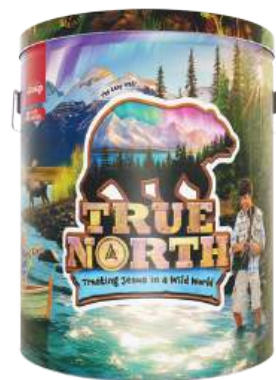
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LOOKING FOR THE DOOR?



5 MISTAKES YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MAKE WITH NEW FAMILIES

Welcoming guest families to your church is a critical opportunity to make a positive first impression and build lasting relationships. You know that getting it right can mean the difference between a family becoming actively involved...or slipping away unnoticed. Here are 5 common mistakes to avoid, along with practical advice and examples from children's ministers who have learned these lessons the hard way.

MISTAKE 1: Neglecting a Personalized Welcome

Relying solely on generic greetings and information packets can make new parents feel like just another number rather than valued guests.

FIX IT: Personalize your welcome approach. Assign a designated greeter or a team member to specifically welcome new families. Engage them in conversation about their children's interests and needs. For example, Sarah, a children's ministry director, says she learned this the hard way when new families who didn't return said they felt overlooked due to a lack of personal engagement in a follow-up survey. By implementing a "Welcome Team" that personally introduces themselves and offers tailored information based on the family's needs, Sarah saw a significant increase in returning guests.

MISTAKE 2: Information Overload

Bombarding new parents with too much information can be overwhelming and counterproductive.

FIX IT: Focus on providing concise, relevant information that highlights key aspects of your ministry. Create a streamlined welcome packet that includes essential details about your program and how to get involved. For example, John, an experienced children's minister, says he handed out extensive brochures and detailed schedules to new parents in an effort to make sure they had all the information they could possibly need. He later realized that most parents were too overwhelmed to process the information and the majority ended up in trash bins. John says he now offers a brief, simple, well-organized packet with only basic information when visiting parents are greeted on their way in. He encourages

parents' questions and reminds them they can connect with ministry volunteers at any point during the morning.

MISTAKE 3: Ignoring Follow-Up

Failing to follow up with new families after their initial visit can result in missed opportunities for connection and engagement.

FIX IT: Ensure you're collecting contact information and implement a structured follow-up process. Send a personalized thank-you note or email, and make a follow-up phone call within a week of their visit. Ericka, a children's pastor, says she initially overlooked the importance of follow-up communication, leading to broken connections with new families at a key juncture. By instituting a system where a caring volunteer reaches out within a week to offer additional information and answer any questions, Emily says her ministry's retention rate of new families increased significantly.

MISTAKE 4: Underestimating the Power of First Impressions

Assuming that parents will return despite a less-than-stellar first experience can be an unfortunate assumption.

FIX IT: Pay attention to every aspect of what a family's first visit will be like, from the cleanliness and organization of your space to the friendliness of your team. Destiny, now the hospitality team leader at her church, says she was struck one morning as she witnessed a visiting family's frustration grow due to a disorganized check-in process and a lack of welcoming interactions. Unfortunately, the family didn't even stay for the service, she said. Dismayed,

Destiny said she began to work with the children's minister and other leaders to make hospitality everywhere in the church a key priority. By insisting upon a clean, organized, and welcoming environment and training volunteers to be attentive and friendly, Destiny and her team help ensure that all guests feel valued, comfortable, and in good hands from the moment they walk in.

MISTAKE 5: Failing to Address Concerns Promptly

Not addressing any concerns or issues that new parents may have can lead to frustration and disengagement.

FIX IT: Be proactive in listening to and addressing any concerns that arise. Have a system in place for parents to easily voice their concerns or ask questions and ensure that these are handled promptly. For example, Lisa, a kidmin volunteer, found that new parents were hesitant to voice concerns about a lack of age-appropriate activities and snack choices because they felt their concerns wouldn't be addressed. By implementing a feedback system for visiting guests, promptly addressing issues and communicating about the solutions, Lisa was able to demonstrate responsiveness and commitment to meeting the needs of new families.

Avoiding these mistakes can significantly enhance the experience of visiting parents and encourage them to become active families in your church community. You and your team's attention to these details will ensure that new families feel valued and supported, paving the way for a thriving and inclusive ministry that thrives.



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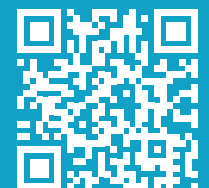
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KEY TECH FOR TODAY'S KIDMIN

5 TOOLS TO LEVERAGE FOR IRL FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Technology is no longer a novelty but a vital tool for engaging, teaching, and connecting with the next generation. Children are digital natives, growing up in a world shaped by technology, and kidmin leaders must adapt. You are no doubt already aware that effective ministry requires more than just good programming—it requires leveraging the right tools to reach young hearts and minds.

Here are key technologies children's ministries need to use or be aware of in 2025.

🔑 Immersive Learning Experiences: Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR)

AR and VR are now mainstream. These tools provide rich, interactive experiences that can engage children in ways traditional methods often cannot. Imagine taking kids on a virtual tour of biblical sites or bringing Bible stories to life in three dimensions. AR and VR can enhance storytelling by allowing children to not just hear the story of Moses parting the Red Sea, but experience it as though they were there.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

- **Engagement:** Kids are visual learners and are more likely to be engaged when they can interact with the content.
- **Retention:** Studies show that immersive learning experiences help with information retention.
- **Accessibility:** Children who might struggle with traditional learning methods, such as those with ADHD or autism, often benefit from interactive, multi-sensory approaches.

🔑 Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Curriculum Personalization

AI has revolutionized the world of personalized learning, and children's ministries can benefit significantly from this trend. AI-powered software can help you adapt existing curriculum to meet individual learning styles, special needs, and even theological depth. Whether a child is a visual learner, prefers reading, or responds best to hands-on activities, AI can tailor the experience accordingly.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

- **Tailored Learning:** Every child is different, and AI can help specialize your existing curriculum for individual needs.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** AI tools can offer valuable insights into a child's spiritual development and suggest ways to help them grow.
- **Scalability:** As ministries grow in size, AI can assist in managing larger groups of kids without sacrificing the quality of individualized attention.

🔑 Digital Discipleship Platforms

Digital discipleship is becoming a key element of ministry as more children and families shift to a hybrid or entirely online model. Platforms like *Minno*, *RightNow Media*, and *Bible App for Kids* are excellent tools, but the future demands an even more integrated approach. Ministries will be smart to provide access to a cohesive online platform where children can learn, interact, and grow in their faith throughout the week—not just on Sundays.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

- **Continuity of Learning:** Digital platforms ensure that spiritual growth continues throughout the week and not just during Sunday service.
- **Parent Partnership:** These platforms allow parents to actively participate in their children's spiritual journey.
- **Accessibility and Flexibility:** Online platforms make discipleship accessible regardless of geographical limitations or schedules.

🔑 Social Media and Short-Form Content

The rise of short-form content platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts has reshaped the way young people consume media. Ministries must harness these platforms to deliver short, impactful spiritual lessons and engage kids where they already spend their time. A 15-second Bible verse challenge, a quick story about Jesus' miracles, or a worship dance tutorial can capture a child's attention far more effectively than a long sermon.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

- **Cultural Relevance:** If you aren't speaking the language of short-form

content, you're missing where kids are spending their time.

- **Engagement:** Social media platforms allow for real-time interaction, which can make children feel more connected to the content.
- **Reach:** These platforms offer a global reach, allowing ministries to influence not only their immediate community but children worldwide.

🔑 Gamification of Learning

Gamification will soon be a crucial tool for children's ministries. Gamified apps and platforms like *Superbook*, *Bible Memory Kids*, and *Guardians of Ancora* show how powerful this approach can be. Gamification taps into a child's natural desire for achievement and progress by turning Bible learning into interactive challenges, quests, or rewards-based tasks.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

- **Engagement:** Kids are naturally drawn to games, and gamified learning can keep them engaged in spiritual development.
- **Learning Retention:** Gamification encourages repetition and practice, which can help children internalize biblical lessons.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward systems in gamification provide motivation for consistent spiritual growth.

Technology will never replace the core elements of children's ministry—relationships, mentorship, and the gospel. However, it will enhance the ways we can reach and disciple kids. The challenge for ministry leaders is not simply to adopt technology but to leverage it in a way that keeps Christ at the center of everything we do.



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Day 5	River of Life	Revelation 22:1-5, 16-17

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