

INTRODUCTION

What's It All About?

Noah's Park Children's Church is a fun, multi-age program that helps children learn and apply important Bible truths. A comprehensive overview of the curriculum is found in the front of the Leader's Guide. Be sure you're thoroughly familiar with the lesson plan before beginning Park Patrol training.

The Park Patrol Advantage

Inviting fourth and fifth graders into your children's church classroom gives them a unique way to learn about God and minister to younger children. As they prepare and help lead, they will be listening and thinking more carefully about the Bible truths. As they help and serve, they will be developing their Christian character. As they interact with you and other teachers, along with the younger children, they will be developing bonds in the Body of Christ and friendships within your congregation.

In addition, lessons are much easier to teach with helpers along. With extra hands, feet, and voices, you will be much better able to befriend, teach, and meet the needs of the preschool and early elementary children. And when a lesson calls for extra helpers, the Park Patrol will be conveniently on hand to lend a hand.



Finding and Recruiting the Park Patrol

First, establish with your church's children's ministries team what ages will be included in your Noah's Park Children's Church. It is designed for preschool through grade 3, with children in grades 4 and 5 as helpers in the Park Patrol. Then try these ideas to present the Park Patrol opportunity to the fourth and fifth graders. Be sure to follow your church's screening procedures and rules for those who work with young children.

- Have other teachers of fourth and fifth graders announce the Park Patrol opportunity—in Sunday school, midweek club, and so on.
- Send flyers home to parents of fourth and fifth graders explaining the Park Patrol opportunity.
- Give age-appropriate flyers to the children to help them learn what the Park Patrol is all about.
- Host a short reception or "Park Patrol Party" after Sunday school or during the children's church time one week, and invite fourth and fifth graders to come and find out what it's all about. Keep it fun and brief. Clearly define the jobs of a Park Patrol member.
- Present the opportunity to work with the Park Patrol as a positive experience rather than a chore for kids with "nothing else to do" during the children's church hour. Make "membership" in the Park Patrol a big deal.
- Be sure to emphasize the benefits of being a Park Patrol member: a chance to be the "big kid" helper, an opportunity

to gain experience working with and caring for younger children, a fun way to learn more about God and the Bible.

Making Park Patrol Membership Fun

If you make your Park Patrol like a club that offers both responsibility and fun, the fourth and fifth graders will show more commitment and better attitudes. Consider ideas like these:

- Design a badge or vest for all Park Patrol members to wear while “on duty.” This will also help the younger children identify who the responsible helpers are when they need help.
- Make up job titles for the various parts of the lesson that need help, such as Puppeteer, Game Coach, or Supply Champ.
- Make up a “club motto” for the Park Patrol, such as “The Park Patrol is always responsible to the teacher, kind to the children, and thankful to God.” Let the kids make up hand motions to help them memorize it.
- Plan a set time for the Park Patrol members to meet before class each week to pray together and double-check responsibilities.
- Set up a buddy system for members to call or e-mail each other during the week. Being a member of the Park Patrol can include deepening friendships and teamwork.

Training the Park Patrol

Training is essential if you want your Park Patrol to be effective helpers in class. It doesn't have to be long—and it can be fun!



Here are some age-appropriate ways to train your Park Patrol:

- Plan a time that is convenient for both kids and parents (to bring them). Consider 30 minutes before or after church, after school one day, or during the children's church hour before your Noah's Park Children's Church kicks off for the year. Be sure to train new members as they are added to the Park Patrol during the year.
- Call the training session a "party" or "member initiation." Keep the kids up and moving or hands-on during most of the training. Use a lot of visuals. Avoid grown-up lingo and training methods.
- Walk the kids through a mini-lesson. In each section, explain what the teacher might need help with. (See the complete list below.)

There are two main areas to stress during your training: responsibility and kindness.

Responsibility: The Park Patrol helpers need to show responsibility to the teacher by arriving on time, paying attention during class, remembering and carrying out duties, and looking for extra (unasked for) ways to help as they arise.

Kindness: The Park Patrol helpers need to be kind to the younger children they are helping. Kindness includes patience and being a good example at all times. If a discipline problem arises with the younger children, the helpers should show kindness as they take the problem to an adult.