

Needs of a Child

Objectives

After this lesson participants will:

- To recognize the different levels of needs children have
- To consider practical ways to meet the needs of children in our ministry
- To prayerfully consider what God is asking us to do to meet needs of children

Lesson Overview

Welcome and Warm-Up	10 min
Identifying Children's Needs	15 min
Progression of Children's Needs	20 min
Meeting the Needs	15 min
Wrap Up & Prayer	5 min

Approximate Total Time: 65 min

Materials

Illustration option:

- Blank paper – one per participant
- Erasable board and writing supplies
- Dirty, torn shirt
- Photo of a child in need
- Five large sheets of paper

Media option:

PowerPoint slides for this lesson

Scripture passages:

- James 2:15-17
- Psalm 23
- Isaiah 41:10
- 1 John 3:1
- Romans 12:4,5
- Psalm 139:14
- 1 Corinthians 12:14-26
- Ephesians 2:10
- Philippians 4:19



Welcome and Warm-Up

10 min

Activity: What Would We Need?

(Divide participants into groups of two and give each pair a sheet of paper. Have them divide the paper into six sections. Then give the following instructions:) Imagine that you will be dropped off on an island that has nothing, including no water, for three days. **What six items will you need in order to survive on that island?** Draw them in the six squares of your paper. (Take three to four minutes. Then have each pair find another pair and compare lists. As a group of four they must agree upon the top six items. After three minutes, the groups of four will find another group of four and compare lists again, this time agreeing on a final list of the top eight items. After three minutes, regroup and allow each group to share their lists and the reasons for including the items they chose. Debrief with the following questions:)



- **What did all the lists have in common?**
- **What did you hear that surprised you?**
- **How much did your original list change from the beginning of the activity until the end?**

We have a good understanding of our basic needs. In order for us to serve children well, we need to understand their needs, especially when they are not able to express them to us in words. In this lesson, we are going to look at a progression of children's needs. **THE 1for50 HAND: This lesson helps us consider important skills to help us "Nurture the Whole Child."**

Identifying Children's Needs

15 min

(Ask the participants to imagine that they are running a children's program and a new child comes in. Watch the child and listen as he/she thinks out loud. Notice the needs of the child.)

Drama

(Have one of the instructors or a volunteer prepare for this drama in advance.) They enter the room very tentatively as a "child", wearing a dirty or torn shirt, perhaps face and hair are dirty or messed up. They appear nervous or afraid. Then they will express thoughts out loud that indicate some of their needs, such as:

- There are so many children here. Do they have room for me?
- I don't know that teacher in the front.
- Those songs sound fun but I don't know the words or the actions
- What's going on here?
- Who should I sit beside? Will they like me?
- (Try to fix hair or shirt) Do I look all right? The other children have such nice clothes.

- (Rub stomach) I didn't have anything to eat today. I'm hungry. Do they give food?
- (Rub eyes or yawn) I'm tired. I had to get up early and walk so far to fetch water today.
- My mom doesn't know I'm here. Will she get mad at me?
- I wonder where the toilet is? I better go find it. (Actor leaves)



What needs did you observe in the child?

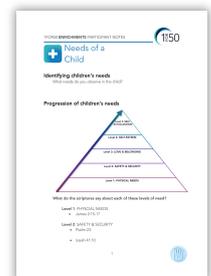
How many of the needs were observable just by looking at the child?

How many needs were internal?

What can we learn from our observations?

(Alternative Activity: Show a picture of a child with obvious needs and then discuss what some of the external or internal needs could be.)

Children, like all of us, have many needs. Let's take a closer look at these needs and how they progress in the life of a child.

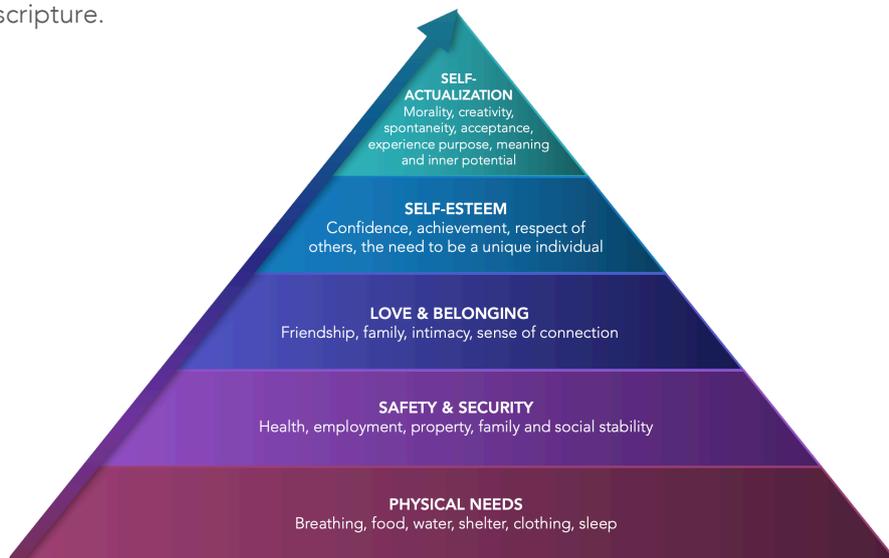


Progression of Children's Needs

20 min

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Around the world, people go about doing similar activities in very different ways. Although the way we do things differs greatly from culture to culture, the basic needs being satisfied remain very similar. Abraham Maslow is one psychologist who studied the needs of people and we will look at the progression of needs he suggested. But because the Bible also speaks about each of those needs, we will look at psychology through the eyes of scripture.



(Describe the five levels, starting at the bottom of the pyramid and going up, explaining how each level must be met before a child can move on to the next level. Like a tower of building blocks—we must start at the bottom. As you describe each level, ask the participants for examples from the child they observed in the drama or from their own experiences.)

Level 1: Physical Needs

The first and most basic of all needs are those to do with physical survival. This is the need for food, drink, shelter, sleep and oxygen. If a child cannot satisfy this basic survival need, it dominates their interest and concern. A child who is cold, sick or hungry will not be very interested in other things.

Level 2: Safety and Security Needs

When a child has his/her basic physical needs satisfied regularly, the child becomes aware of the next level of human need – physical safety. This is the need to feel safe in the world: to feel protected from personal danger and threats and to feel secure. It includes both physical and emotional security and peace. When this need is not met, it results in fear. For a child to develop fully as a human being there must be some freedom from fear of personal attack, particularly in the child's own home.

Level 3: Love and Belonging Needs

Once the physical survival and safety needs are being regularly met, a need for love, affection and belonging begin to emerge. Level 3 needs result from the fact that human beings are sociable and need relationships with others. Some of these needs include:

- Family or belonging – the need to belong to a group, family, religion, or community.
- Acceptance and understanding – the need to feel all right and to know that others accept you as you are.
- Love and affection – the need both to get and give love.
- Intimacy – the need to share inner thoughts with others in close, caring ways.

Children deprived at this level have feelings of loneliness, pain, sadness, separation and unworthiness.

Level 4: Self-esteem Needs

Most children have a need to feel valuable and worth something, which is called the need for esteem. Self-esteem means having a degree of self-respect and respect from others. Self-respect includes the need for confidence and achievement. Respect from others includes recognition, attention and appreciation.

Level 5: Self-Actualization Needs

If the first four needs are being met, a new one may emerge: the need for self-fulfillment, to become all that a child can be, building on their potential. Self-actualization includes developing all aspects – physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. A self-fulfilled child feels complete, joyful, satisfied, and has a sense of purpose for their life.

As children's needs are met in each level, they are able to grow to the next level. If there are significant unmet needs at any one level, it becomes difficult, if not impossible for the child to fully develop.



Looking at Scriptures:

The Bible has much to say about each of these levels of need. (Divide participants into five groups. Assign each group one level of needs and have them look up the scriptures related to that need. They also can add other relevant scriptures if they know of them.)

- **Level 1:** Physical Needs – **James 2:15-17**
- **Level 2:** Safety and Security – **Psalm 23; Isaiah 41:10**
- **Level 3:** Love & Belonging – **1 John 3:1; Romans 12:4,5**
- **Level 4:** Self-esteem – **Psalm 139:14; 1 Cor. 12:14-26**
- **Level 5:** Self-Actualization – **Ephesians 2:10**

(Give each group opportunity to report back their findings from the scriptures.)

Now that we understand the progression of a child's needs, it's time for us to get practical and look at ways we can help meet those needs in our churches and ministries.

Meeting the Needs

20 min



As we look at the list of needs, we see that some of the needs can be met by us, but we realize some needs must be met by others. (Have people return to their five groups corresponding to the five levels of need. Give each group a large sheet of paper and ask the group to answer the following three questions on their sheet of paper:)

1. **What are we doing right now to help children at this particular level of need?**
2. **What could we do that we currently are not doing?**
3. **What other resources (people, programs, etc.) could help us meet these needs of children?**

(Give participants 10 minutes to work together, and then come together and share. Encourage people to jot down ideas they would use in their own ministry setting to meet children's needs.)



Wrap Up & Prayer

5 min

If we want our children to grow up following Jesus for a lifetime, we need to recognize and seek to fulfill the child's needs. Remember, if the basic needs of a child are not met, he/she cannot focus on your program or lesson, no matter how good it might be.

Take a few minutes to reflect on what God is saying to you from this lesson. Perhaps you have been challenged to pay more attention to the children to determine their needs. Perhaps you have been given an idea of how to



better minister to the needs of the children you serve. Maybe you feel that you need to evaluate your program to see if you are truly meeting the needs of the children at every level. Do not feel overwhelmed, but think of one small step you can begin with. Take some quiet time with God. You can write your response on the participant notes.

(After three to four minutes close with a promise from scripture:)

We may not be able to meet every need of children but there is one who can. **Philippians 4:19** says, "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

(Close with prayer.)