

# Including Children in Worship

A summary of Parenting in the Pew

## Why should we include children in Worship?

1. You are bringing your child to introduce him or her to the Lord. You are sharing two very intimate relationships (a child of God and a parent) and connecting them. Like introducing your two best friends to each other.
2. Modeling- Children learn best how to do things by doing them. They need to see their parents participating in Worship, praying, giving offerings, following along in their Bible, taking notes, listening, giving their full attention, and building relationships with others. They need to see baptisms, decisions made, people asking for prayer at the altar, and hear testimonies of God at work in people's lives.
3. The longer you wait, they harder it is to engage children in the Worship. The habits they form now will be habits for life.
4. The Children's Church we are using now is not training children to participate in Worship. It's fun, entertaining, and energetic and there are clear messages and worship songs included. However, there is little to compare it to the Worship going on downstairs. We are singing, dancing, writing or drawing prayers, coloring, playing games, hearing a scripture, using drama and storytelling, and hearing a short message. All good things, but not different from other children's programs we have. Nothing sets this apart as a special time to worship God.
5. We are exploring ways to bring the children into Worship and the parents into children's Worship once or twice a quarter. This will give validity to both types of Worship as pleasing to God and provide insight into different ways to worship.

## Practical ways to include children in worship

- PRAY! Ask God to give you patience and wisdom. Ask Him for blessings of these times together and make them significant to your child. Ask Him to prepare both your and your child's heart for worship. Pray for the leadership to include children in the service.
- Say we are going to Worship, not church. Prepare your child on Saturday (including laying out clothes, etc.) and get them excited about going to Worship God. Talk about the reasons you go and why you don't want them to miss out. Tell them you want them to sit by you in church and talk to you about the service when you get home later.
- Explain your expectations. Can they whisper to you if they have a question? Can they stand on the seat to sing? Will you allow them to draw or write during the sermon? Do you expect them to stand? When is it okay to leave worship? Are they allowed to have toys, books, snacks? BE CONSISTENT! Don't make empty threats. Correct their heart in private.

- Choose your seat wisely. Make sure that they can see and hear. Don't sit by their best friend. You may choose to sit by parents who are also training their children for Worship to support one another.

- Use touch- arm around, hand on shoulder, hold hands, etc.

-Talk about a new way of doing things- like when you get a new car, carpet, or couch and all the rules change. Take your child to the Sanctuary and talk about the parts of the service they will participate in and what they will see and hear.

-Reward them if they meet your expectations. Whoever sat the best or can answer the most questions correctly gets to pick lunch, for example.

-It is best not to provide them with distractions: books, coloring books, snacks, toys, napping, etc. This sends a message that some parts of the service are not important or that God doesn't need our full attention. If they can watch TV for a 30 minute show, they can listen to the sermon.

#### How the church will partner with parents

I will provide a children's bulletin. It will have the Worship expectations, order of service, an outline or sermon activity, and a blank page on back. Please do not let them draw until sermon time. They should draw something to do with the service or the music they heard that morning. Hold them accountable for this! There will be times when it will say bring this completed to the check in booth for a prize, but not every week. You can use this to review the sermon or talk about things that came up.

Pastor Mark will incorporate as often as he can a reference to get the children's attention. He will use them as examples when possible. You have already seen him do this.

The Worship leaders will also bear in mind that we will have the children present and try to integrate things for them on occasion. Playing instruments, clapping, waving ribbons, motions, etc.

The adults who do not have children sitting with them will be asked to greet them, learn their names, model, and encourage them. Hey \_\_\_\_\_, you did a great job singing today. I really noticed you obeying your mom. Can I see the picture you drew? Wasn't that story about bananas interesting?