

## Encouraging and Helping Your Children in Worship - by Pastor Phil

All children are welcome in our worship services. The following are some helps for parents who want to help their children understand worship and how to "listen with understanding" (Neh. 8:3)

### Young children and the singing

The joyful noise of children singing is precious to Jesus and is to be encouraged (Mt 21:15-16). When you receive the bulletins by email on Fridays (if you're not on the list you can email [goldcountryoffice@sbcglobal.net](mailto:goldcountryoffice@sbcglobal.net) to be added), the songs for that Sunday could be sung by your family to practice. If you're interested in online sources that have the lyrics and music that could be played on a PC/smartphone/tablet, let us know (some old hymnals here may be available, too)

### Young children and communion

As little ones observe communion for the first time, questions are likely to emerge. Consider:

1. Communion gives a great opportunity to explain the gospel (Josh. 4:21-24, Ex. 12:26-27)
2. Before they observe communion I recommend explaining it's not for little children and is not a snack, but it is for Christ's disciples (Matt. 26:26-30). Paul says it's for "*a man*" who "*examines himself*," and his words call for both a level of maturity and discernment to "*discern rightly*" the body with accurate judgment, and understanding what it means to partake "*in an unworthy manner*" and the warnings (1 Cor. 11:28-31). As they become adolescents or young adults and regularly examine themselves and confess their sins to the Lord un-prompted by their parents, it's good to encourage baptism and communion, and we have a study guide for that time called *Preparing Young People for Baptism*.
3. I would encourage baptism as the first step of obedience/discipleship before communion (order and pattern of Mt 28:19-20, Acts 2:38-42, baptized then break bread/communion)

### Young children and the sermon

They won't understand all in a worship service, Scripture expects parents to help after (Ex 12:24-27, 13:14-16). Ask them about the message and the bulletin Sunday School questions (Deut 6:7). Use key words on the note sheet to help kids listen for and mark how many times they hear them. We also have another pamphlet with "Sermon Notes for Kids" if they find helpful ([Click here](#)).

### *"Suggestions for Helping Your Child Worship," by Bethlehem Baptist Church*

Sometimes the difference for children between enduring Sunday morning services and enjoying Sunday morning services is simply a matter of preparation and training. It is our heartfelt prayer that your child will come as a participant in the service to worship our great God. To that end, we have prepared a few suggestions that might help you lead your child to worship this morning.

#### **1. Be Prepared for Worship**

Sunday morning starts Saturday night-- lay out clothes (find all shoes!), get offerings ready, rehearse memory verses, gather together everything you need to bring with you, etc. before Sunday morning. Keep Sunday simple-- Make a simple breakfast and leave the house with time to spare. Remind your child of your expectations of his behavior during the church service.

#### **2. Be a Role Model for Your Child**

Start your morning with a positive attitude, a cheerful tone...enthusiasm, and a heart for worship.

### **3. Walk Your Child Through the Service Before it Starts**

Look over the bulletin; point out what will be happening and how your child can participate. This may mean teaching him a refrain ... or teaching him a phrase from a song or chorus and asking him to listen for it. You may want to pray with your child before the service starts.

### **4. Encourage Your Child to Participate**

By teaching your child hymns and choruses at home he will be able to participate in the service. If he cannot learn the whole hymn, teach him the refrain and signal to him when it is time to sing the part he knows. Encourage your child to sit and to stand at the appropriate times, to clap when appropriate, etc. Show him the words in the hymn book, moving your finger along as the hymn is sung. (Even if your child is a nonreader, this will help to focus his attention and encourage him to pay attention to the words.) Have your child bring an offering and place it in the [box]

### **5. Help Your Child Become an Active Sermon Listener**

Help your child to focus on the sermon by quietly whispering instructions to him-- i.e. "Listen to this story", "Can you draw a picture of...". This is not a time of long instruction, but just very short statements to focus their attention. It is also not a time for your child to whisper back to you. Encourage a younger child to listen to the sermon and to draw a picture of something from the sermon. (This should not be seen as a time for doodling, but for active listening.) If your child is very young and has a hard time sitting for a long time, after he has listened to the sermon for awhile, you may want to let your child look at small (nondistracting) Bible storybooks. As your child gets older and learns to write, model for him how to take simple notes-- Let him copy your notes at first; then encourage him to take his own. Keep a spiral notebook [for Sundays]

### **6. Stretch Your Child's Ability to Sit Attentively**

If you have an active child, you may need to take your child out of the service part way through. Keep stretching him until he can sit through the whole service. You may need to be firm. Reaffirm positive behavior.

### **7. Talk About the Service on the Way Home**

Speak positively with your child about the service, and ask him if he has any questions. Encourage him to share his drawings or notes.

*From 'Children in Worship-Mom Tested Tips' (Kevin DeYoung's Gospel Coalition blog, 3-7-12)*

- 1. Focus on this moment throughout the week:** Talk about Sunday morning worship all week long. Help your children to see each week begins with this privilege (Acts 20:7; Heb. 10:24-25).
- 2. Model excitement about the Lord's Day:** Children learn a great deal by watching their parents. If Mom and Dad reluctantly go to church, then the children will reluctantly go to church. If Mom and Dad are critical of the preacher, sermon, etc. then the children will most likely be critical. Wake up early on Sunday morning and prepare for worship. Let the children see ... excitement.
- 3. Implement family worship at home:** A family that worships together at home will find it much easier to worship together in corporate worship. A child will find it natural to hear the Word of God, to read the Word of God, to sing the hymns, etc. This will also help our children to learn to sit still, to understand the importance of worship, to focus during prayer, etc.
- 4. Read the passage during the week:** Most sermon series are an exposition of one book of the Bible. This means that you know what you are going to hear read and preached in the week's service—the next passage. Read it throughout the week and converse about it around the dinner table or during family worship. The children will then be familiar with the text that the pastor is preaching on. With this knowledge, give them some things to listen for in the sermon.

5. **Use Moments in the Service:** Use transitional moments in the service to whisper in your child's ear how much you loved a certain verse in a hymn, how you need to remember to pray for the sick person mentioned, or how you were convicted by that application. It keeps them engaged and allows them to see you participating intently in the service.
6. **Use the Obvious Helps:** We often forget to use the helps that are already available to us. For example: have an older child find the Bible passage or guide your finger over the text as it is read for a younger child. Use the bulletin and show your children where the service is at ...
7. **Create an atmosphere in your row:** Encourage your children to pay attention, to stand when everyone stands, to sing when they are to sing, to bow their heads in prayer when the congregation is to pray, etc.
8. **Affirm Your Children:** When you leave the service and are on the way home, affirm your children. Ask them questions about the service and relay how the Lord blessed you. Encourage your children if they were well-behaved and let them know how wonderful it was to worship alongside of them.
9. **Be Consistent:** It will take time for your children to learn how to sit still, sing the hymns, etc. Be consistent in your expectations and desires for them during the service.
10. **Do Not be Overzealous:** *Be patient with your children and shower them with grace.* It takes children time to adjust and different children adjust or accept on different time tables. Your child may come into the service and sit attentively and quietly within a few weeks or you may have to help your child with this for months or even years (as has been our case!). Be patient! Love them and do not compare them to other children. God has blessed you with this little bundle of joy!

I hope this is helpful but if there are other ways we can support your family please let us know.

Pastor Phil