Helping Our Children Prepare for Worship, Engage in Worship, & Respond Accordingly.

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Like every Christian parent, I want to teach my children to sit still and to engage in the corporate worship gathering of the saints! But it's hard! It's a battle! It's sanctifying! But it's a God-given privilege for me and my wife to endeavor to intentionally strive, to the best of our abilities with God's help, to equip and train our children to prepare for corporate worship, to engage while in corporate worship, and to respond accordingly when the worship service has finished. *In this brief write-up, I'll provide four ways that we seek to help our children in this.*

1) Attention!

Each Sunday when we're in family worship *prior* to arriving for corporate worship, we tell our children to "pay attention" in the meeting of the people of God! Pay attention! Sounds simple! But this is intentional and we want to not only tell but help our children understand the high honor and wonderful privilege of meeting with the living God of the universe! One way we help in this is to *model* it for our children. That's why we strive to have an open Bible before us while the Word is being preached. When the songs are being sung, we endeavor to stand and read the Words and sing together *with* our kids. When the pastor opens the Word and has the congregation stand for the public reading of Scripture followed by the pastoral prayer, it is our goal for our children to pay attention and participate in this. All in all, we desire our children to *not* tune out, but to *actively* engage in the meeting with the living God!

2) Notes/picture!

We have 5 children. Their ages range from 8 down to 2. We provide one notebook and one pen for our children during the worship service and we encourage the older ones to draw during the sermon. We encourage them to listen for a few key words that will be said (from the text) and a few of the illustrations or Christians in history that will be mentioned. The goal here is for them to listen for these particular key words/concepts that I'll mention in my sermon. We ask the kids to draw pictures of something that is said in the sermon. As they write notes or draw pictures, we seek to ask about it afterwards.

3) Apply!

Once the pastor has closed the sermon in prayer, it has been well said by someone of old, that the sermon has really just 'begun.' For now it rests upon the listener to be a doer of the Word that he has just heard. So we want to shepherd our children through the simple questions of *what* was just preached and *how* it affects them in their lives. Sometimes this may happen on the way home. Other times it may happen when we're putting the kids to bed. It could even happen Monday morning when they wake up. But we strive to be faithful to instill in our children's minds that the sermon is not just a data dump to sit through and endure, but rather it's an opportunity to hear from God *and to respond accordingly* and to be changed for God's glory!

4) Pray!

Another item that we try to model for our children is prayer *before*, *during*, and *after* the time of corporate worship. When our family gathers for family worship before the worship gathering with the saints, we pray for the preacher, for the Word to go forth with power, for the congregation, for the nursery workers, for all the teachers (of various age groups), for the lost to come to be saved, and for visitors. It's also helpful to pray after church and thank God for the wonderful gift of sitting under His precious Word faithfully expounded and asking for His enabling grace to *implement* specifically what was said from the pulpit.

Our family is *far* from perfect. We don't even incorporate these four principles perfectly, all the time. But we do, by God's grace, strive to be intentional and faithful to God to instruct our children in the glory and majesty of God, and to model for and instruct them in the joyous privilege of meeting with God's people and hearing the Word boldly preached! May God help us!