

SBC Shepherd Statement: On Use of & Transition from Childcare

*We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.*

Psalm 78:4

We thank God for the children that walk through the doors of our building each week. Our greatest desire for our children is that “...*they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments...*” (Psalm 78:7). We believe that parents have the primary responsibility in teaching and training their children about setting their hope in God (Deuteronomy 6:4, 2 Tim. 3:14-15). Our aim as a church is to therefore equip, encourage and support parents as they work towards that end.

As elders, we recognize that this happens as children develop over time. Our wise God has wonderfully created us in this way! Therefore how we equip, encourage and support parents takes on different shapes in those different developmental stages. This statement gives consideration to how we encourage our members to use and transition their children from childcare to participation in the worship service.

We want to begin by saying children ***are always welcome in our service***. We love the sound of children singing, whispering questions, and rustling pages. Far from being a distraction, it truly brings joy. In fact, in Matthew 18:1-5, Jesus called a child to himself to teach his disciples who are the greatest in His kingdom. So we ***want*** children in the service to remind us to have that sort of child-like humble faith and reliance upon Jesus.

We know it can be hard for very young kids to sit in the service and so ***we provide childcare for children from birth through those entering kindergarten***.¹ During that time, we seek to provide a safe and loving environment² where we teach our children the whole counsel of God with a special emphasis on the gospel. We also desire for this to be a training ground for our children to learn what worship is and how we participate together as a church.

This leads us to the major section of this statement: considering how to transition our children from childcare into active participants in the worship service. This is an issue of wisdom, one that will be applied with variety among the different families in our church, but let us lay out five principles when thinking about transitioning.

¹As elders we recognize this age range as something that can and likely will have some variance in different seasons of our church.

²We take the protection of the children in our care very seriously, you can learn more [here](#) in our Child Protection Policy.

Start earlier, not later. We know it's a lot of work to have young hearts with you in the pew (many of us have experienced the highs and the lows!). We'd encourage you to start when your kids are younger—don't wait until they have to leave childcare. One gloriously wonderful way for our children to learn to love Jesus is to see what love of Jesus looks like in their parents and other members of the church during the worship service.

Transition slowly, not all at once. While we encourage you to start earlier, we also encourage you to move slowly. One challenge in waiting until the last possible moment is the culture shock for a child who goes from playing in the nursery to now sitting in a worship service. So move slowly, have them be a part of the service for the announcements, call to worship, prayer of praise and the first song, then bring them down to the nursery. After they get used to that, have them stay longer and longer, until they're ready for the whole thing. View our provided childcare as a tool for training, not as a must.

Start at home, not at the building. One of the best ways to have kids ready for participating in worship is to participate in family worship at home. Setting aside even just a few minutes a day to gather together as a family to hear God's Word, pray and sing a song will go a long way into preparing the hearts of your kids (& yours!) for worship.

Preparation is key, not procrastination. Sunday mornings with young kids are **HARD** and one way to help ease that burden is to prepare on Saturday night. As it's been said "Sunday morning worship starts with a Saturday night decision." A Saturday night before bedtime could look something like this: pull the kids' clothes out, pick out their favorite notebook or activities to bring, read the sermon text as a family, listen to the songs and pray that we would be ready to worship God together. And then *try* to get everyone to bed on time so that all are well-rested for the morning!

Have patience and grace, and don't be afraid to work. It will be hard for your kids initially to worship, it's not easy, but it's worth it. Just like your children have to learn to dance, to play sports, and to eat their vegetables (bleh!), they have to learn what it is to worship. This takes work for them and it takes work for us. One of the great dangers of our day as Christians is to expect that we come on Sunday morning just to watch and enjoy. The reality is we come to participate in worship, not as spectators of worship. Worship is work for us and for our kids. So be patient with them and show grace. Their squirming seems far more distracting to you as the parent than it really is to others in the church. Be patient and ask God and others for help! God has placed us together with families of children of all ages who have walked through many iterations of this so consider talking with other parents who have been doing this work and gain from their wisdom. Lord willing over time, that work will yield hearts for all that are happy in Jesus.

Childcare is a wonderful blessing and useful tool in the life of our church that is a great encouragement to many. We are so thankful for the volunteers who make it possible. Our aim in this statement is not in any way to burden parents, but to better equip and encourage them as their kids make the transition from childcare to service.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What about age-appropriate teaching for kids? Wouldn't it be better to teach at their level?

Age-appropriate teaching is a valuable thing, but should never replace the main corporate worship gathering. It's clear from the letters of the NT that the early church expected kids to be a part of the gathering of God's people. So, we want to be wary of planning anything that purposefully keeps our kids away from that gathering. Following the pattern of the NT letters, as pastors we seek to be intentional to regularly apply God's Word to the kids in our corporate worship gathering. We also provide several opportunities for age-appropriate teaching for kids during Sunday school at 9:30am on Sunday mornings, family night on the first Wednesday of every month, youth group and events like VBS.

2. Won't my child get bored?

There's no doubt that corporate worship could bore children. However, the possibility does not mean that it *must* bore children. When we understand that we are drawing near to the God of the universe, and that he is drawing near to us, it is hard to see worship as boring! How do we help children who get bored? Jason Helopolous is helpful here:

"If our children find themselves bored in worship, then let us teach them the significance of the event. Let us model before them the joy of worship. Let us encourage and help them to engage in this holy other act. Let us pray that God fills them with the same delight we ourselves experience in worshipping the Sovereign God of the universe. ...Will it always be exciting? No, but neither is every second of their school day, ballet class or their soccer game."³

Parents, our children often catch what we project. So, if we lack the delight of worshiping our God, then we too should seek God and plead with him to work in us and to use us as a means for our kids.

3. Aren't we just going to turn people away?

This is understandable, we might be concerned about turning our kids away, turning away other parents who desire a different kind of philosophy, or those who have special concerns. Let us briefly address turning our kids away. We all desire for our children to want to worship the Lord. But will they fall in love with worship by being kept from it? How do young boys grow to love baseball? By going to the games, experiencing the crowd, the food, and the noises. Do they understand all of it at first? No, of

³Helopoulos, Jason. "Let the Children Worship", pg. 81.

course not. Will they always find it exciting? No. But week after week, year after year, dads bring their sons to baseball games and they grow to love it. And there are lots of these examples. We often have to try and keep trying for our kids to learn to love things. This will require for us as parents to have compassion on our kids as they struggle. Empathize with them, be careful to yield the wisdom of Proverbs 15:1 and pursue a gentle answer that turns away wrath. And parents-the best thing for our kids is to worship the One True Sovereign God forever. We think as pastors the best way for them to learn to do this is to participate in the corporate worship each and every week. But we are happy to discuss with you concerns, questions, or different scenarios you might have or are thinking through.

4. Isn't taking my child out because they are crying or disobedient the same thing as leaving them in the nursery?

If you have had a young child in the service, you likely have had to leave with a crying or disobedient child to comfort or discipline them. Some might want to contend this differs little from placing our kids in the nursery or another program. But, this is much different. *"We temporarily take our children out of the service to comfort or discipline them. It is an exception, not a rule. We may lose a few moments, it may even mean the child and parent miss an entire corporate worship service, but the child does not miss every service of their youth."*⁴

5. Won't I as a parent get less out of the service?

Parents, we love you. The struggle and cost of having a young child in the service is real. We believe you need corporate worship just as your kids need it. However, young kids often present a complicating factor. You may be reading this and feel like you haven't experienced an uninterrupted worship service for months or years and the road ahead seems long and windy. But brothers and sisters, the price is worth it. Think of it like a good investment-it's costly up front, but rewarding in the long-run. So, set your mind on the things above, remembering the eternal benefits and the truth that *"No sacrifice we make for the sake of the Kingdom will ever leave us walking away disappointed."*⁵

And friends, it's okay to ask for help. Use the community God has given you. Have a single person sit with you to help you with the kids. Ask a friend to sit with the kids every so often to enable you to rest. You are not alone. May these words encourage you from the song "Almost Home" by Matt Boswell and Matt Papa:

*This journey ours together, we're almost home, Unto that great forever, we're almost home
What song anew we'll sing 'round that happy throne, Come faint of heart, we're almost home*

Weary parents, we're almost home and we're not alone. May God help us to press on in endurance!

⁴Ibid., 83.

⁵Ibid., 84.

Resources

[10 Ways to Make the Sermon Much Less Boring by Deepak Reju](#) (PDF from CHBC Website)

[Parenting in the Pew by Robbie Castleman](#) (book)

[Let the Children Worship by Jason Helopoulos](#) (book)

[God Made Me for Worship by Jared Kennedy](#) (kids book)

[The Family: Together in God's Presence by John and Noel Piper](#) (article on Desiring God)