

Eight Tips for Talking to Your Kids About the Sermon

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By Joe Holland

Let me introduce you to the most important rule when talking to your kids about the sermon: **They retain more than you think they do.** The second most important rule is like it: **They understand more than you think they do.**

In the interest of these two truths I'm writing this brief guide on how to talk to your kids about a sermon. I'm writing it both as a **preacher** and as a **parent** of four boys under the age of 8. I've failed, succeeded, and failed some more at talking to my kids about Jesus. Hopefully the tips you find below will help you as they've helped me.

At the heart of the gospel is Jesus introducing us to his loving Father. In worship we get to make a similar introduction—we get to introduce our kids to Jesus. Don't miss that opportunity.

Your kids will lead you down rabbit trails. Go with them. You'll find out a ton about how they think. And you may just enjoy the unexpected stroll off the beaten path.

8 Tips for Talking to your Kids about the Sermon

1. **Remember the outline.** It doesn't matter if you keep written notes or not. Remember the gist of what is being taught. If your pastor preaches for 40 minutes, then try to make a mental note of what you've covered at the 20 minute point. Don't be discouraged if you can't get every point. Get as many of the big ones as you can.
2. **Know the one, main point.** Every passage and every sermon—no matter what your pastor says—has a main point. Grab it when you see it go by and don't let go. And as a word of caution, every preacher has a bad day. Sometimes the structure of the sermon looks like a piece of abstract art. If so, do the best you can. But don't let the guy close in prayer without having a main point in your head.
3. **How is Jesus the hero?** Now that you have an outline and main point, make sure you have Jesus too. How was Jesus the hero of the sermon? Kids are incorrigibly self-centered—and so are a few adults. Make sure you have a ton to say about Jesus, no matter what the passage or where the preacher went with it. Without an emphasis on Jesus your little saints will grow up thinking that the Bible is all about them.
4. **Engage your kids with open ended questions.** You know the outline and you can keep to the main point. You know you're going to talk a ton about Jesus. Now engage your kids with any kind of question you can think of... except ones that can be answered, "yes" or "no". Here are some examples:

- *In the story questions:* “What would have thought if you were an Israelite soldier and saw big ol’ Goliath walking up to little David?”
 - *Emotions questions:* “If you were blind, how would you feel if Jesus put his hands on your eyes and fixed them so they could see?”
 - *Leading questions:* “The rich young ruler was wrong because he thought he could earn God’s favor. Why is it silly to think we can earn God’s favor by doing enough good things?”
 - *Action questions:* “What would you have done if Jesus had made a hurricane turn into a cool breeze right in front of you?”
 - *Application questions:* “If Jesus has forgiven you, do you think you can forgive Tommy when he wings a Tonka truck at your head?”
 - *Use your imagination questions:* You know your kids best. Make up some questions.
5. **Make sure the gospel is clear.** *Jesus died for sinners.* It’s very simple and can get very complex. But no matter the passage, don’t you dare teach your kids moralism. Tell them that Jesus has done everything necessary for them to know that God is overjoyed with them. When you tell them to do something, feel something or think something, show them how those things are motivated by God’s love and not by fear, guilt or pride.
 6. **Be the first to pray and confess.** Talking to your kids about the sermon is as much letting them watch you learn from the sermon as it is teaching them about the sermon. If the preacher is helping your congregation diagnose sin, show your kids how it affected you. You could say, “You know, sometimes, daddy struggles with being angry. And it’s then that I realize I really need Jesus.” And when it comes time to pray, let them pray after you. Model for them what it looks like for a Christian to talk to God.
 7. **Chase rabbit trails.** Your kids will lead you down them. Go with them. You’ll find out a ton about how they think. And you may just enjoy the unexpected stroll off the beaten path.
 8. **Remember the first two rules.** After all this, you may feel like it was a complete waste of time. It’s at that point you must remember the first two rules:
 - They understand more than you think they do.
 - They retain more than you think they do.



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And I promise you this, they will remember these times with you. They will forget a ton. But they won’t forget Sunday afternoons with daddy and mommy talking about Jesus.