

WORSHIPPING WITH CHILDREN Part 1

One of the great joys, privileges, and opportunities for the Christian is to gather regularly with the church body to worship the living God. However, when we worship with children, or grandchildren, occasionally Sunday morning can seem like the longest hour of the week. We desire for our children to love and worship God. We pray they will enjoy, and engage with God through worship and other church gatherings. But the reality is that parents can become deflated and frustrated.

Perhaps you wonder if your child is too young to benefit from worship with adults. Or maybe, you've found yourself feeling like Robbie Castleman in her book *Parenting in the Pew* who says, "Worship can be one of those times when we parents would like to pay attention to something other than our children. Kids can be distracting, aggravation and embarrassing in church. Parenthood can make sitting in a pew a lot of work. Paying attention to our children can make us less attentive to the service.

The temptations to just stay home, or at least to keep the kids out of the sanctuary, are real. It's hard to pay attention to God and children at the same time."

Do you resonate with thoughts like these? It seems that we all do at different times. However, there can be much more to worshipping with children than this alone.

This is the first of a series of emails designed to encourage and inform you about how parents and grandparents can enter into the adventure of guiding your child(ren) into the joy of worship.

Each email will include:

- insights from one chapter from the book *Parenting in the Pew: guiding your children into the joy or worship* by Robbie Castleman. She describes the book as, "an expression of my joy in learning with my children how to remember the Lord's Day and keep it holy."
- [future emails] suggestions for engaging with your child in worship, and
- [future emails] description of worship resources that are available to help you along the way

Insights from *Parenting in the Pew*:

- The longest hour of the week? - "For many parents, sixty minutes in a pew with a squirmy toddler or sulky teen can seem like forever. Worship can be the furthest thing from our minds when children are distracting." In the weeks ahead we will hear more about how to think differently about Sunday worship with kids.
- Training Children to worship. Parents see to it that children are trained to play an instrument or sport. We teach our kids to read. But few parents consider the importance of teaching children how to worship. We will think about how to be more intentional with what we do with our children during worship.

- Worship with children can be more than *shhh, be quiet*. Castleman says, "Parenting in the pew can be a hot battle or a holy triumph of grace. It can consist of whispered commands: *be quiet, shhh, sit still*, or it can contain the most intimate moments of life with God's family together in his presence. Sunday morning with children in the pew can be the longest hour of the week, or it can provide the very best preparation for eternal joy."
- Focusing on what is truly important. "Biblical worship is partly intended to help God's people remember, rehearse and reenact God's great story of salvation. To enter that story week after week with one's children is a great reminder of our place in that story. It's good for us to realize that we are not the 'star' of God's story, but that God is the ultimate means and ends for faith and life - for ourselves and our children."

Dear friend, we'll stop here for today. I pray this note will encourage and help you. More to come next week.

In Christ,

Pastor Brice