



AGE 6

The Trunk Years



HOME
22.6

AGE 6

A Snapshot of Life

All children develop differently, but some characteristics are the same. Below are some developmental changes that may be present this year as your child grows physically, emotionally, and spiritually during age six. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should give you some insight into what to expect and how to parent your child through this stage of life.

At 6 years of age, your child

- Needs rules and rituals.
- May begin asking for privacy.
- Plays with friends of the same gender.
- Is developing a moral sense; he/she will see things as right and wrong through the lens of parents and teachers.
- Sees things as black and white with no middle ground.
- Has a tendency to still be egocentric.
- Begins to ask tough questions.

Parenting Tip

Because 6-year-old kids see themselves as the center of the universe and are proud of their accomplishments, this is a good time to teach them the difference between confidence and boasting (Proverbs 27:2; Ephesians 2:8–9; James 4:13–16). It is also a good time, if you haven't already, to begin telling your child that you don't know, when you don't know the answer to certain questions. Be ready for tough questions, even the ones that make you squirm.

Parent Dedication

What is Parent Dedication?

Parent dedication is giving a strong spiritual legacy to your children. The Legacy Principle, the Likelihood Principle, and the Lenses Principle are crucial to your child's spiritual growth. In the parent dedication section you'll find tools to help you grow as a parent. **The Legacy Principle** states that the scriptures tell us that what we do today directly influences the multi-generational cycle of family traits, beliefs and actions – for good or bad (Exodus 20:5-6, Psalm 78:5-8). So passing a strong faith to our children begins by having a strong faith ourselves, modeling the gospel in our marriages and in how we relate to those closest to us. Some of us need to break negative cycles that may have started with our own upbringing in order to launch a new and improved legacy for the next generation. **The Likelihood Principle** states that the good news is this: in the context of healthy relationships, children tend to embrace the values of their parents. Proverbs 22:6 tells us that when children learn right from wrong at home under the nurturing, loving training of parents, they tend to adopt mom and dad's beliefs. While there are no guarantees because every child has a free will, kids are far more likely to embrace their parent's faith if they enjoy their parent's company! That's a big part of the reason parents are warned not to "provoke your children to wrath" but rather "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Bottom line – a strong relationship with mom and dad is key to a strong Christian faith. **The Lenses Principle** says Jesus taught that our enemy's primary weapon is deception – getting us to believe and live according to lies rather than truth (John 8:44). And when someone is deceived, he or she does not know it! Our children are growing up in a culture that bombards them with lies. An hour or two per week at church is no match for the hundreds of hours spent with media, school, and friends. Nor can it compete with a child's fallen nature that often wants to rebel against what is good, true and beautiful. It is the job of parents to equip children with the corrective "lenses" of truth so they can better navigate the deceptive roads of life.



As the primary disciple-maker of your children, your spiritual growth is very important. You cannot pass along to your children what you don't have yourself. Spend time each day in God's Word. Take time to pray and to listen to what His Holy Spirit has to say to you. You are important to Him.



Parenting Tool: *Communication*

Communication is an important tool in any relationship but is especially important at the beginning of the Trunk years. As your child is beginning to ask tough questions and is beginning to develop a moral sense, establish good parent/child communication, so that you can continue to be the most influential voice in your child's life throughout these formative years.

Tips for communicating with your 6-year-old:

1. Talk to your kids—a lot! Talk about anything and everything! Let this be the silent but understood agreement between you and your kids: you will listen as long as they want to talk! It isn't necessary to come back with corrective phrases, try to improve on your kids' perspective, evaluate, judge, or ultimately prove that you know more than they know. Try responding with phrases such as "I never thought about it that way," or "that's an interesting way to look at it," or "I can tell you've given this a lot of thought." When you have a chance to engage your child in conversation, leave the child feeling good about himself/herself and about your relationship. Deuteronomy 6:5–7 commands us, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." Talk about life, and show your kids how Jesus fits into every part of it!

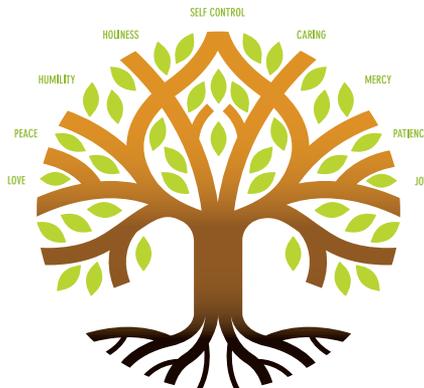
2. Learn the difference between responding and reacting. If you want to keep the lines of communication open, practice responding instead of reacting. Certainly there are times when parents need to react, but, all too often, we tend to react in a knee-jerk kind-of-way that alarms our kids needlessly and makes them feel belittled. If a kid knocks over his milk at the breakfast table, you can react and get all bent out of shape over it, saying, "What a mess you've made! Now get down, and clean it up! No more milk for you!" On the other hand, you can respond and say, "Uh-oh. There's a towel by the sink you can use to clean that up. Accidents like that happen when your glass is too close to the edge of the table."

Responding and reacting reflect your personal attitudes. Move with caution, so you can keep your relationship with your kids positive and open. Ephesians 6:4 warns us, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

3. Watch your tone of voice. Realize that your tone of voice is a reflection of your attitude as well. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your conversation be gracious and effective." Why? "...So that you will have the right answer for everyone" (NLT). Not just the "right answer" in terms of what you say, but how you say it. Are you familiar with the "93-7 Principle" in communication? This principle explains how only 7 percent of the effectiveness of communication comes from the words we use, while 93 percent comes from how we say what we say. If your tone is calm and relaxed, your communication will be much more "gracious and effective." Your kids will want to talk to you and listen to what you have to say!

Remember, your countenance and attitude can either encourage or discourage conversation. When your kids come to you, they need to be thinking, "I can talk to my mom and dad about anything, and I won't be embarrassed, judged, evaluated, or made to feel stupid, selfish, or inadequate. Kids may not be thinking these exact words, but that's what they will be feeling.

This is your time to establish that you, as the parent, are the person to come to for information and the Truth. Answer all questions truthfully and clearly, even the questions that make you squirm. If you don't know the answer, tell them that; find out the answer, and get back to them. If you prove to answer honestly and provide your children with the information they are looking for, they will continue to come back to you throughout the Trunk years and into the Branch years as well.



Parents play a role in growing fruit in their child's life by how they communicate with their child.

Blessing Your Children

How do I bless my children?

There is power in a blessing. The Hebrew word for blessing is used over 640 times in the Old Testament alone. Do you know the very first thing God did after creating us? In Genesis 1:27–28 we read, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them...” We were made for blessing! Based on examples in the Bible, there are five basic elements that make up a biblical blessing:

1. Meaningful Touch Meaningful touch has many beneficial effects. The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation—even physical health! For anyone who wishes to see the blessing grow and develop in a child, touch is an integral part of the blessing. As Mark 10:13–16 says, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”

2. A Spoken Message Words have an incredible power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. This is particularly true when those words are coming from our parents. Therefore, the blessing hinges on a spoken message. Your child desperately needs to hear a spoken blessing from you. As parents, we must be keenly aware of the power of the spoken word and also be aware of how powerful the absence of spoken words can be. Both people and relationships suffer in the absence of words of blessing, or those spoken words of love, encouragement, and support. Proverbs 16:24 reminds us, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones...”

3. Expression of High Value To “value” something means to attach great importance to it. This is at the very heart of the concept of blessing. Anytime we bless someone, we are attaching high value to him or her. Our children need to hear that they are someone who has great worth apart from his or her performance. As Ephesians 4:29 reminds us, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

4. Picture of a Special Future Communicating a special future to a child is another important part of giving the blessing. Children are filled with the potential to be all God intends them to be. Picturing a special future for your children can help bring out the best in their lives. It gives them a positive direction to strive toward and surrounds them with hope. When a child feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude toward life. We can see this very thing in our relationship with the Lord. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

5. An Active Commitment The first four elements listed above are the building blocks of the blessing, but the mortar that holds them together is an active commitment—the fifth element. This element of the blessing describes the responsibility that goes with the blessing. Parents need to rely on the Lord to give them the strength and staying power to confirm their children’s blessing. You have God’s Word through the Scriptures as a guide, plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Words alone cannot communicate the blessing; they need to be backed with a commitment to do everything possible to help the one blessed to be successful. Isaiah 40:31 encourages us, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

For more information on the biblical blessing, see *The Gift of the Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent, PhD.

Ways to Bless Your Child

Write a blessing for your child based on the blessing elements of “expression of high value,” “picture of a special future,” and, “an active commitment,” as described in the “Blessing Your Children” section.

Use the following Scripture, or any Scripture you choose, to pray over your children daily. This can be at night before they go to bed, in the morning as you wake them up, in the car on the way to school, or any time in between.

“May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.”

— Numbers 6:24–26

1. Words of love and acceptance

Name qualities about your child that you admire; focus on who your child is, rather than what he or she does. For example, compliment your child on how s/he exhibits one of these characteristics: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, mercy, and humility.

2. Acknowledge a special future

Tell your child ways you see how God can use him or her in the future. For example, you might say, “God has given you such a sensitive heart. I wouldn’t be surprised if you end up helping a great many people when you grow older.”

3. Reaffirm your commitment

Be sure your child knows you are on his or her team and are supportive. You might say something like, “Don’t forget I am here to support you, pray for you, and encourage you to be all God intends for you to be.”

4. Give a Written Blessing

Give your child a written blessing at a special dinner or one-on-one time. Be sure to keep the written blessing in your child’s blessing box.

5. One-on-one time

Plan one-on-one time with your child, in which you can include the five elements of blessing. Some suggestions for one-on-one time with your 6-year-old include:

- Watching a sunrise or a sunset from a favorite spot
- Staying at home and building a fort with blankets
- Going for a walk along a river or lake
- Visiting a pet store
- Lying down on the grass and making out shapes in the clouds
- Going for a drive, cranking up the music your child likes, and singing it loud. Call it a “carty” (car-party)
- Getting all dressed up and going out to a fancy dinner
- Having a water balloon fight
- Making a time capsule and burying it someplace only you know
- Picking a bouquet of flowers

What's a Blessing Box?

In Genesis 1:27–28 God's Word says, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them...” We were all made for blessing! Written words can place unconditional love and acceptance into the heart of a child. One idea for sharing blessings with your children is to have a “blessing box,” or a special box where you can store written blessings and encouraging words for your child as they develop. Several ideas for written blessings include Scripture passages you claim for your child, words of affirmation, descriptions of accomplishments, desires for the future, prayers, or whatever God puts on your heart. Continue to store these blessings in the special box throughout your child's life. Think of what a treasure it will be in your child's adult life to have this blessing box!

Family Time

What is Family Time?

The idea of family worship is both attractive and intimidating. The thought of beginning a new pattern of worship in the home can be overwhelming for those just beginning. This guide includes answers to basic questions that we hope will equip you to lead your family in worship.

What does the Bible say about growing together in Christ as a family?

The importance of the family in discipleship is prominent throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15). Husbands are primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of their wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). Parents, especially fathers, are primarily responsible for the spiritual growth of their children (Ephesians 6:1-3). These are huge responsibilities, but God has promised to provide everything we need to lead our families well, according to His design. As leaders in our home, the critical thing to remember is that God's Word must be written upon our hearts. Our faith in Christ and reliance on His Word should be authentic, tangible, and transparent.

What are the benefits of family worship?

- Family worship brings glory to God. It is a visible reminder for all in the home that God is worthy of our time, attention, and affection.
- Family worship produces joy in the home. Jesus will bring joy to families who worship and grow together. The love of Christ will be more evident in a family where worship is central.
- Family worship effects change in the world. As families read, pray, study, sing, and grow together, they join from their homes in what God is doing across the nations, while influencing each other's lives for generations to come.

What should we do during family worship?

Keep it simple. Consider the following elements as you worship together:

READ—Read a portion of the Bible together. Don't worry if you've already read it in your time alone with God. Reading a chapter a second time will only reinforce what God is teaching you. If children are present and able to read, allow them to do so. Of course, you'll want to explain difficult words and concepts (but don't worry too much if you can't explain everything!).

DISCUSS—After reading the Bible together, work through a simple process of examining what has been read, much like you do in your own time alone with God. Give everyone a chance to discuss the passage and consider how it applies to everyday life. Ideally, you will lead by example and share with your family what you learned in your time alone with God and the difference it has made.

PRAY—Consider praying through the key points of the Bible passage that you have just read and discussed. Ask God to change your hearts, minds, lives, and family accordingly. This specific prayer can lead to a more general time of prayer that uses the letters P-R-A-Y as a guide:

Praise—Worship God for who He is.

Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.

Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever He leads you.

Try to include everyone as you pray, even if this is on a rotating basis. Additionally, you may want to keep a prayer journal that enables you to keep track of prayer requests and God's answers to those requests.

SING—Sing or listen to music together as a family. If someone in the family has musical gifts, that person may lead some simple songs. If no one in your family is musical, you can sing along with music from a CD or DVD and discuss what the songs mean.

MEMORIZE—Choose key verses or passages to memorize. You may want to work on a verse or passage for a week or a month. Either way, be sure to work together, taking time to understand what you are memorizing. Periodically, set aside time to review verses over the course of the year.

Frequently Asked Questions About Family Worship

1. What if a father or mother is not a Christian?

The commands regarding family discipleship in the Bible assume believing parents. Of course, this is not always the case. In those instances where the father is not a follower of Christ, the mother will need to take the initiative for leading family worship in a non-offensive and non-threatening way. In the case of a mother not being a follower of Christ, the father should lead with compassion and sensitivity.

2. What about a single parent family?

In this case, the responsibility falls to the single parent. This, along with the many other duties that single parents have, may present a significant challenge. However, God will supply great grace and everything we need to raise and strengthen our children in the faith.

3. What about children?

The dynamic of family worship will vary considerably depending upon the ages of the children involved. The goal for every child in the family is not the same. With young children, focus on the importance of knowing God, respecting the Bible, and worshiping as a family. With older children, dig into Scripture more, ask good questions, and discuss how the Bible relates to life and how a relationship with Christ changes us every day.

4. How do I keep things interesting if the ages of my children vary widely?

Regardless of age, include children in planning, reading, singing, teaching, and praying as much as possible and as much as maturity will allow. Make sure to keep things simple, and don't be afraid to keep it short; listen well, and be aware of what is happening in each child's heart and life.

5. What time of day is best for family worship?

Timing is far less important than consistency. Some families prefer to worship as the day begins. For others, evening may work best. Many families prefer to adjoin family worship to the evening meal since everyone may be present at that time.



Deuteronomy 6:7 says,
"You shall teach [God's words] diligently
to your children, and shall talk of them
when you sit in your house, and when you
walk by the way, and when you lie down,
and when you rise up."

Concentrated time in family worship
can serve as a catalyst and support for
"as you go, as you sit, as you walk"
conversations and applications of God's
Word within our families. Encouraging
and challenging our spouses and children
in Christian faith happens best in the
context of real, everyday life. Family
worship builds consistency into our family
routines and opens up many opportunities
and possibilities within our family
relationships.



A Family Time from Exodus 33,34 & 40

READ

o Exodus 33:12-34:10

o After Moses met with God on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights, he returned to the people of God with the tablets containing the words of His covenant, The Ten Commandments. He began to construct the tabernacle exactly as God instructed him to do. Once completed, God dwelt among His people in the tabernacle.

o Exodus 40:34-38

o Ultimately, God designed the tabernacle so that He might dwell among and with His people, a picture of the reality that one day God would tabernacle with us in the person of Christ. Then, in an even more wonderful picture, through the Holy Spirit He would make His people, the church, the place of His dwelling.

The Bottom Line: God's glory was displayed in the Old Testament as He dwelled in the tabernacle. Since Christ's coming, God's plan for the world to see His glory is through the church and the lives of His people.

Questions:

Where did God's glory dwell during the Old Testament times?

How did people experience God's presence then?

How did this change in the New Testament?

How do we experience His presence today?

What does it mean to display His glory to the world around us?

PRAY

o Intercession means praying for others' spiritual and physical needs. God tells us in His word to pray for others. If you desire to read some passages from scripture about this, some are listed below.

Biblical Basis for Intercession:

1 Corinthians 10:3-5; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 6:18-21; 1 Timothy 2:1-8

Take an opportunity for those gathered with you in worship to mention specific prayer needs of others. Pray for each one of these requests specifically.

o Refugees are people who have fled their home country to find safety in another land. Pray for refugees.

- Ask God to provide for the needs of the refugees around the world.
- Pray for those who have suffered the loss of family, friends and possessions.
- Pray for the Global Church to minister to refugees for the sake of the Gospel.
- Ask God to move in the situations that have displaced so many refugees.

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o Exodus 34:6-7 "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'"

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions to help their children discover the truths of God's Word and worship Him together.

Preschool (Birth-Kindergarten)

o Grab a pair of mismatched socks (example one striped and one plain). Sit down with your child and put the socks on your feet. Do my socks match? No, they are different. Do you think anyone would notice they are different?

o When Moses was alive, he was different from all of the people around him. Moses followed God's rules and did what God told him to do and this made him different. Do you think that people noticed Moses was different, just like you noticed my socks were different? Yes, they did. Moses followed God's rules in everything he did and that made him different.

o There is another person who is different from everyone else. His name is

Jesus. In God's perfect plan, God sent Jesus so we would never have to feel alone or without God. He sent His son Jesus to save us because He loves us that much. We don't need a tabernacle like the one we learned about today to know God is with us. Jesus showed us how we can talk to God anytime. We can worship God anytime. When we choose to follow Jesus and turn away from our sin we will be different, too. This is how we show His love to others all over the world.

Children (Grades 1-5)

o Items needed before you begin:

Piece of paper or poster board, Pencil, a colored marker

o Draw 2 circles, one inside the other, on your piece of poster board or paper. Label the outside circle "The World". Label the inner circle "The Church". Use your pencil to draw lots of dots in the outer circle; these represent the people of the world. Use your colored marker to draw a few more dots in the inner circle; these represent the number of people in the church. Have your children notice there are many dots in the church, but there are even more dots in the world. Using arrows, show that the dots in the church can move to the dots in the world anytime they choose. When they move to the world, they are displaying God's glory to the nations.

o Discussion Points: How do you make friends? How do you get to know your friends better? What are you doing to know God more? Are you spending time with God? How will the world come to know and experience God's glory? What are you doing to display God's glory where you go to school, in your neighborhood, on the ball field, in your extracurricular activities, etc.?

Students (Grades 6-12)

o We know that God does not live in a man-made, physical structure that we sometimes incorrectly identify as "the church." In the New Testament, God chooses to dwell in followers of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. We are the Church!

o What are some ways God reveals His Glory through us today at school, at work, in our home or in our neighborhood?

o What are some ways we can block or hinder His Glory from shining through us? (Sin, quenching the Holy Spirit- 1 Thessalonians 5:19 or grieving the Holy Spirit- Ephesians 4:30) o What should we do if we are hindering

or grieving His Spirit in us? (Repent- 1 John 1:9) o What are some practical acts or avenues of service that God can use to reveal His Glory through us to others?

Church Community

What is Church Community?

With so many young people leaving the church after they are under the leadership of their parents, it is important that we teach the necessity of the church. Scripture says that the church is the Bride of Christ and He has given the church these four responsibilities: worship God, connect with others, grow in God's Word, and go tell the world about Christ. It is important that our children understand the heart behind what the church is meant to be and that our children allow Christ to transform their hearts to serve Him through His church.

We go to church to worship our God who has saved each of us and given us a personal relationship with Him. We go to church to come together to celebrate our Heavenly Father by giving Him our worship. Our children should see families living their lives side-by-side, sharing experiences, caring for each other, being open with one another, and praying together. Our children should know that the church is a place where they can grow in their faith and gain the knowledge that will help them grow closer to the Lord and live a more abundant life. In other words, our children should know the church is a place where we can be transformed. Finally, the church leads us to the point where we must open our eyes and our hearts to step out and follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit to reach the world around us.

Why Is Going to Church Important?

The Bible commands us to go to church, and—even more—to be a functioning part of it. Hebrews 10:24–25 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the

assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." The New Living Translation puts it this way: "Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near." Notice that the Bible does not say, "Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together unless Sunday is your only day off, or unless you want to run in a triathlon, or unless it's a great day to go to the lake, in which case you are excused because you just don't need fellowship as much as other Christians do."

Some people have had bad experiences at church, but that is not a reason not to attend church. The church has its flaws because people are in it, and we are all flawed. That's why we need Jesus in the first place! Jesus both started and loves the church. He died for it. We should forgive and find a church body where we can worship and serve God. It's not about us.

Being in fellowship with others is God's design for His people. It says in 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death" (NIV). Psalm 133:1 says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (NKJV). Not going to church is a spiritual problem, not a time problem. We read in 1 John 2:19, "These people left our churches because they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left us, it proved that they do not belong with us" (NLT).

Studies show that if you don't go to church for a month, the odds are almost 2 to 1 that you won't go for more than a year. Being a vital and active part of the church is something we pass on to our kids. A study once disclosed that if both Mom and Dad attend church regularly, 72 percent of their children remain faithful in attendance; if only Dad attends regularly, 55 percent remain faithful; if only Mom attends regularly, 15 percent remain faithful; and if neither attend regularly, only 6 percent remain faithful.

Therefore, it is very important for us to make church attendance a priority, not because God is up there taking roll, but because it's our heart's desire to worship our Father, grow in the knowledge of His Word, and connect with others in Christian fellowship.

Why Do Our Elementary-age Children Attend Worship With Their Parents?

Worship is a place for families. It is an environment for families to grow together spiritually. With our chaotic lives—school, work, soccer, and dance, etc.—our families need time together in peace. Children need calm and security, and that doesn't always happen at home. Sitting in worship, holding hands, and speaking Scriptures and prayers together can give our families a respite. Once families are comfortable with these practices, it's our hope that they'll be able to incorporate them in their daily lives away from church as well.

Although we like for church to be fun, there are several other adjectives that seem like more important descriptors of what church should be: spiritual, educational, and transforming are a few. Church is a time of holiness, an opportunity to grow in our understanding of God's love for us and His desires for our lives. Children can experience and appreciate this if given the opportunity. Children of all ages are able to enjoy music and prayers and begin to learn valuable lessons, even from sermons aimed at adults. They will also see that they are a special part of a larger congregation of people, the church body.

We know that sitting in church can be difficult for young ones who've never experienced it before, but, when prepared, children can meet high expectations. Let them know, lovingly, that you expect them to sit still, stay quiet, and pay attention during the service. You may want to practice this. You may want to take your child into the sanctuary when it's empty. Sit in the pews and experience the silence. Show them the quiet voice to use when speaking in church so if they have a question, they can ask it appropriately. Tell them what'll happen during the service, where the musicians stand, how they take up offering, etc. But, always remember kids are kids. We all have restless days and fussy moments, and children don't have the ability to control that as much as adults do. There will always be days when worship seems impossible, but it's those days that we simply honor Jesus' words to "let the children come."

Just like so many other things, children learn to worship by observing others. Embrace the time you have each Sunday with your child during worship.

Help your child find the Scripture reference in the Bible, help him or her take notes, and point to the words as you sing. What a privilege it is to worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords with your church family and especially your children each week.



Discipling As You Go

What is Discipling As You Go?

Deuteronomy 6 is clear in its instructions to parents: constantly, as you live your life, be an example and train your children to follow the Lord. As parents, it is important for us to live a consistent life of faith in front of our children. As things happen in life, we should use those events to train our children, not only in right and wrong, but also in how to make decisions to live the abundant life that Christ has for us. We should model and explain how God's truth should be the standard of how we live our lives. In other words, even from the beginning, we should teach wisdom rather than the facts of "do's and don'ts." Faith is much easier caught than taught. Parents should always help their children see life's decisions through the lenses of our faith.

Parenting Tools: *Talking in the Car*

Believe it or not, one of the best places that you have an opportunity to talk with your children is in your car as you go. The argument could be made that the car is a place where we **SHOULD** talk to them. Deuteronomy 6:7 says that we should talk about God's commands when we "sit at home and when [we] walk along the road." This means as we go, and most of us do a lot of going! The opportunity is there. Turn off the music, phones, videos, and games. It's amazing what your children will share with you as you drive. Maybe it's because they aren't looking into your face. Whatever the reason, they'll share what's on their heart if you turn off the distractions and listen.

Parenting Tools: *Sports*

As you begin to consider sports for your children, remember your priorities for them. We live in a sports-crazed society where it is easy to get caught up in the crowd and gravitate toward one of two extremes. Either “we live for sports” or “sports are an evil to be avoided.” The challenge is finding balance and making sports work for your family, instead of your family working for sports.

The two major themes related to the psychology of young, school-aged children are acceptance and achievement. As parents, we must define what acceptance and achievement look like for ourselves before our children begin sports, and determine what our goals are for our children in playing sports. What we as parents praise is what our children will attach value and worth to and will seek to achieve. So here are a few thoughts to consider along with some possible responses.

How do we define a “win?”

If a “win” is tied solely to the score at the end of the game, then winning is all that matters and our children are taught to win at all costs. What if winning is only part of what we define as a “win?” If we choose to highlight and praise sportsmanship, personal improvement and effort, then we can “win” even when we lose. Our kids want our acceptance and approval, and how we respond to the outcome of their game is going to send a clear message of our values.

What is our personal level of involvement?

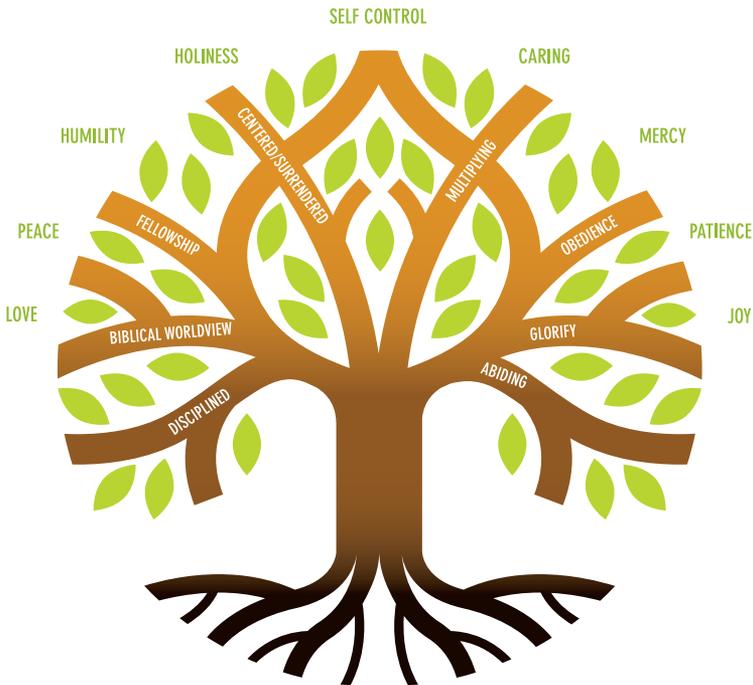
The challenge here is to remember the purpose of our children playing sports. It is really for them to have the opportunity to work as a team, learn values associated with playing a sport, and be challenged to achieve goals. It is not about us living through them and infusing their game with our competitive desire. Our level of passion must follow their level of passion. As parents our role in sports is to support, encourage, guide and supervise. When we step beyond this role we are actually hindering instead of helping.

How do we, as a family, represent Christ in our league?

We are called to be ambassadors for Christ and we cannot simply leave Christ in the parking lot at sporting events. We have to filter our actions and reactions through this truth. We have to step back, remove ourselves, and ask the question, “If another parent responded this way, what would I think

of them?" Other parents are already asking this question, and how we react to our children, their coaches, the other team and the referees reveals our character to a world that needs Jesus.

Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 3:1 are applicable here: "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is an appointed time for every event under heaven." We need to let our children enjoy this season of life as they play, learn and grow.



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