

Parenting Tools:

Staying Connected to the Church



HOME
22.6

Parenting Tools:

*How do I help my child Stay
Connected to the Church?*

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Now think back to the good old days. Think back to the days spent making mud pies or dreaming of your future wedding. Think back to those games of chase-around-the-playground, those slumber parties, and summer vacations with your “second family.” Though the memories are still there, it is likely that many of the relationships you had with those people have changed. Some have gotten stronger, while others have dwindled to next to nothing.

If he or she hasn’t already, your child will soon experience these same changes in his or her own relationships, and not just in human relationships. Your child’s relationship with the Bride of Christ—the church—will also undergo some hardships. School, sports, work, and friendships may all be used by Satan to lead your child (and maybe even you) away from the church. However, the list below outlines four things that will better prepare children to handle these ploys by Satan.

To combat Satan’s ploys and stay connected to church,

1. Kids need to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

The reality is most of our churches today are populated with people who have tagged their faith to a person, an event, or even a church. However, faith in anything other than Jesus Christ is like a house built on the sand, waiting to be washed away. If your child has a relationship with a group of Christian friends, that’s great; but that is not enough to keep him or her tethered to the church. If you make your children attend church with you every time the doors

open, once again, that is good and all, but a relationship to a schedule will not keep them connected. Your child can only become a new creation if he or she has a relationship with Jesus Christ. Without a relationship with Jesus Christ, it is impossible to have a true desire to be a part of God's church.

2 Corinthians 5:17

2. Kids need to be equipped rather than entertained

Too often, is the church more focused on keeping people comfortable and happy rather than equipped and enabled.

Likewise, we often want to be entertained or catered to rather than challenged. The work of the church is not for the staff alone. God's Word says that ministry is the work of the people. It is the responsibility of the staff to equip the people to do the work of the ministry. If your child is not equipped to be a part of the church, he or she will never be equipped to stay connected to the church when Satan throws out his traps. Your church staff is there not to replace you, but to come alongside you as you equip your child to be as much like Jesus as he or she can.

Ephesians 4:11–12

3. Kids need to have high, realistic expectations set for them

"Well, they are out sowing their wild oats," you may have heard this old saying about certain teenagers. The translation for this saying is that the teens are participating in activities such as underage drinking, pre-marital sex, or unwise decisions. Normally when that phrase is used, it is spoken in such a way that conveys that the speaker is not surprised that the teenager went off and did those things. In other words, the speaker suggests that the teenager was relatively expected to make those unwise decisions.

However, rarely do teenagers fall short of the expectations set upon them. It is uncommon to see a teenager who does not go out of his or her way to strive to meet set expectations. With this in mind,

raise the bar spiritually for your children. Expect them to look like Jesus rather than the world. Expect them to be visible, engaged members in the church. Expect them to use their gifts for the advancement of the Kingdom.

4. Kids need to have parents who talk about Jesus

Think back to the last time you had a conversation about Jesus outside of the church. Now, think about the last time you had a conversation about Jesus inside the church.

When was the last time you talked with your child or your spouse about Jesus? ...Not just talked about the Sunday school lesson or about whether or not they liked the music or sermon—but about Jesus?

Do not be afraid to talk to your children about Jesus. You are the most influential person in their lives. We talk most often about the things that are most important to us, good or bad. If you claim that Jesus is important to you, then do not be timid in talking about Jesus with your spouse and your children. The more you talk about Jesus, the more likely your children will talk about Jesus. The more you talk about Jesus and the more your children see Jesus in you, the more they will want Jesus to be important to them.

Now that you understand some of the things your children must have in order for them to resist Satan's traps to disconnect them from the church, consider these steps to further prepare your child to stay connected to the church. Proverbs 22:6, Deuteronomy 6:7

1. Model connectivity to the church body

Model what it means to be connected to the church. Be present at church. Make church a priority in your own life, your marriage, and your family. Center other activities (practices, study groups, etc.) around your church involvement. Do not see the church as interruption to your life but as a key part of it.

2. Get involved in Kingdom work

Strive to be an active participant rather than a mere member. Get involved in God's work that the church is doing. Strive to be a sponge that soaks up the teaching of God's Word for the purpose of being "wrung out" into the life of another. Be active in engaging your neighbors with Jesus and inviting them to church. Pray earnestly that God might open doors for you, your child—maybe your entire family—to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth through the church.

3. Surround your child with other significant adults

God has gifted you with your child. Yes, you are to be the primary discipler of your child, but Scripture never said you are to do it alone. Research says that it takes seven significant adult relationships (not including mom and dad) to affect spiritual change in the life of a teenager. Be intentional in surrounding your child with other adults within the church who will significantly invest in your child spiritually.

4. Own the church

Take the church personally. Rejoice when new believers come to Christ. Take responsibility when the church misses an opportunity to impact the community. Take the blame as a vital member of the church rather than shifting it to someone else. Use personal statements like "my church..." and "our church..." to help remind your child of the importance and privilege of being a part of a church.