

# PARENTING IN THE PEW

## HI CHRIST CHAPEL FAMILIES!

**We miss you and we miss your children!**

We are excited that our church family is resuming in-person worship services, but also know that a lot of families will continue worshipping from home until Children's Ministry starts gathering again in person on Sundays.

So, we had a thought: What if we used the time that we have worshipping at home to train our children on how to worship? That way, when we gather together in big church, your children will be equipped and engaged.

Most of what we're going to share is from a book called "Parenting in the Pew" by Ruth Graham.

As you know, worship doesn't come naturally for us humans. Our guess is that it doesn't come naturally for our children either. We teach our children how to make beds, hit baseballs, figure fractions and shop wisely. In the same way, let's train our kids to be actively involved in worship, not just helping them be quiet during an hour at church.

I know many of you are thinking, "But how can I worship if I'm having to train my child during worship?" Let's be honest, children can infringe on our worship experience. But we promise you that it blesses God and He values the presence and praise of children (Matt. 18:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16).

## SATURDAY PREPARATION

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So, let's begin with preparation:

Sunday morning starts on Saturday. Let's announce to our family that we are going to worship together tomorrow. Share your excitement of being able to worship the risen Savior and dive into God's Word.

- **Gather your Bibles** – one for everyone. Physical Bibles will help your kids pay attention more than looking on an app.
- **Gather the sermon notes.** We have a couple for you to choose from, depending on the age of your child. (These can be found on our website, [www.ccbcfamily.org](http://www.ccbcfamily.org). Scroll down until you find "Children's Resources." The password is "Childrens".)
- **Gather your offering.** Set up a jar or a bowl in your living room for the offering. If your children are young and don't get an allowance, give them money for the offering on Saturday. Let them know that they can bring it when you meet together for worship. Saturday is also a great time to begin teaching your kids about tithing.
- **Set the expectation and link to an appropriate training reward.** Tell your kids that you want them to participate and to listen carefully and you will have rewards. Some parents may see the rewards as a bribe, but remember that you are training your children to listen. They will soon not need the rewards.

All of us desire that our kids follow the Lord with all of their heart, soul and mind. So, let's make a non-negotiable **commitment to worship on the Lord's day**. Let's show our kids the importance of worshipping the Lord.

## SUNDAY TIPS

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Our goal in training our kids to worship is to help them pay attention to what is happening and learn how to be a part of it. We know it's harder when you're sitting in your living room and not actually at church, but let's try to instill in our children that we are not "watching church." We are in the presence of the Lord to worship.

Let's talk ages: The author of Parenting in the Pew states that **3-year-olds and some younger children can be trained to participate in worship that's a little more than half the service.** By about age 4, **children can be in a service of worship for the entire time.** Since we are training in our homes, let's start early with our 3-year-olds!

As you gather together, sit together during worship. **Have the youngest child sit next to you so you can help draw their attention to different parts of the service.** This will get your child used to being beside you in worship.

## SOME IDEAS TO WORSHIP IN SONG:

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- It is important to help children feel physically involved. Since we typically stand when we sing, it would be a good idea to practice it at home.
- Encourage your children to listen even more attentively to the words.
- For very young children, you can tell them to sing "La la la" with the tune if the words are totally unknown or unpronounceable to them; or ask them to listen for a particular word or phrase in a song and to squeeze your hand when they hear it.
- Encourage your children to praise God directly with their hearts and voices. And as awkward as it might feel at home, try to sing in such a way that the child can hear the song clearly.
- Whisper instruction or comments occasionally to help your children understand the song. If your children know the song, tell them to close their eyes and sing to the Lord.

## SOME IDEAS FOR THE PASTORAL PRAYER

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- You can help train your child for the pastoral prayer all during the week.
- Remind your kids every time you pray that you can just talk to God in your own words and you can sit quietly and ask God to speak to you.
- For your **very young children, teach them to fold their hands and close their eyes to help them enhance their ability to concentrate on whatever they're doing.**
- Use the time of worship at home to help your children listen to the "prompts" during each part of the pastoral prayer. For instance:
  - **When we praise God**, you might whisper to your child to choose something about God's character and tell Him that they love Him because He is ... (good, trustworthy, in control of all things ...).
  - **When we confess**, you might whisper something like, "Now is the time to tell Jesus about stuff we're sorry about. Tell Jesus about this now and ask Him to help you next time." **Toddler confession time** can be used as a time to thank Jesus for loving us no matter what.
  - **When we thank God**, you might prompt your older kids to thank God for things other than material items (salvation, relationships ...).
  - **When we tell God our needs**, you might whisper to your child to remember someone you know who needs prayer.

## SOME IDEAS FOR THE SERMON

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- Children need to be involved. So, **allow them to hold the Bible and let them sit very close. Hold them more as a hug, not a tug.** Point to the words as the scripture is read.
- If your child is able to read well, help them use their index to find the scripture.
- Parents can draw attention to the content of Scripture as well as it is read by **asking questions** like:
  - How do you think Jesus looked or sounded when He said this?
  - How would you feel if you had been there?
  - What does the scripture say about how you felt yesterday?
  - If the reading is a narrative or story (like the book of Ruth), **young children can pretend that they were really there when the action took place.** Or whisper “Listen to this story.”
  - **You usually only have time to ask one question or make one comment to draw attention to each part of the worship as it happens.**
- **Encourage your child to listen:**
  - **Ask a young child to squeeze your hand every time he or she hears that word or phrase, or help him or her learn to listen.**
  - Use the notes to direct young school children to **draw pictures** of what they hear.
  - Older children can use the sermon notes to **take their own notes.**
  - **The key is still to concentrate on the service, not just do something.**
- As you sit in worship, make notes of the questions you can ask your kids.
- As a reminder, we are training our children for worship, so that could also mean taking your overactive child to another room to restate your expectations. When you return, have them sit close to you and direct their attention to the sermon.

## TIPS FOR AFTER SERVICE:

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- **Plan a time shortly after worship to ask questions. This will help cement what they learned and also the importance of listening.**
- Ask younger children questions about **details.** For example:
  - What was Naomi’s daughter-in-law’s name?
  - Why did Naomi and Elimelech move to Moab?

Reinforce truths that were emphasized in the sermon. For example, even though Naomi’s husband and sons died, God was with her. He never leaves us – ever.

- For older children, ask questions about what they learned. For example:
  - What did you learn about God in the story about the tree?
  - Why do you think Pastor Cody said that Naomi’s family should not have gone to Moab?
  - What was one thing you learned from the sermon today?
- Let them know how much you appreciate their cooperation and listening. Follow up with the reward if you decided to give one.

