

# Suggestions for Helping Your Child Worship

Sometimes the difference between enduring and enjoying Sunday morning services with your children is simply a matter of preparation and training. It is our sincere prayer that your child will come as a participant in the service to worship our great God. To help you in this process, we have prepared a few suggestions below on how to work with your children both at home and at church that might help you maximize your worship experience together on Sunday morning.

## **1. BE PREPARED FOR WORSHIP**

Remember: Sunday morning starts Saturday night! To make your Sunday morning easier, lay out clothes, find all shoes, get offerings ready, practice memory verses, and gather together everything you need to bring with you (i.e. – small book bag with notebook, pencil, crayons, etc.) on Saturday night. Keep Sunday morning simple! Make a simple breakfast and leave the house with time to spare. Also, be sure to remind your child what your expectations are of his behavior during the service.

## **2. BE A ROLE MODEL FOR YOUR CHILD**

Start your morning with a positive and cheerful attitude, a spirit of anticipation and enthusiasm, and a heart ready for worship. Your attitude affects your child's attitude and he is watching your example!

## **3. TALK THROUGH THE SERVICE BEFORE IT STARTS**

Talk about what will be happening during the service and how your child can participate. Encourage him to sing along when a song or chorus he knows is played. You may want to pray with your child before the service starts. Visit the restroom and get a drink beforehand as well.

## **4. ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE**

By teaching your child songs and choruses at home he will be better able to participate in the service. If he cannot learn the whole song, teach him the refrain and have him sing the part he knows. Encourage your child to sit and to stand at the appropriate times, to clap when appropriate, etc. Show him the words on the overhead screen. Even if your child is a not a reader, this will help focus his attention. Have your child bring an offering and place it in the plate.

## **5. HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME AN ACTIVE LISTENER**

Help your child to focus on the sermon by quietly whispering instructions to him-- i.e. "Listen to this story", "Can you draw a picture of...?" This is not a time for long instruction, but very short statements to focus his attention. It is also not a time for your child to whisper back to you. Encourage a younger child to listen to the sermon and draw a picture of something from the sermon. If your child is very young and has a hard time sitting for a long time, after he has listened to the sermon for awhile, you may want to let him look at his Bible or small, non-distracting Bible storybooks. As your child gets older and learns to write, model for him how to take simple notes. Let him copy your notes at first; then encourage him to take his own.

## **6. STRETCH YOUR CHILD'S ABILITY TO SIT ATTENTIVELY**

If you have an active child, you may need to work on sitting still at home. Using a short time each day for sitting quietly and reading books can be very helpful in training young children to use self-control and increase focusing skills. Make sure these times are clearly explained (i.e. – no talking, you must stay in your chair with your books, etc.) and short enough for your child to be successful (start with 5 minutes). Model this "sit time" yourself while your child is sitting and be sure to give lots of encouragement when the designated time is over and he was successful. Times can be lengthened as the child shows consistent success. At church, you may need to take your child out of the service part way through if he has trouble sitting still. Keep stretching him until he can sit through the whole service. You may need to be firm, but be sure to reaffirm and encourage his success.

## **7. TALK ABOUT THE SERVICE ON THE WAY HOME AND/OR AT LUNCH**

Speak positively with your child about the service, and ask him if he has any questions. Encourage him to share his drawings, notes and what he learned. Discuss what you learned as well. Consider using the sermon passage as a source for family devotions during the week.