

The most important evangelism you'll ever do is with your own children.

Through the attitudes, behaviors, and habits that your children observe, and through the encouragement you give them, you will help them to see that God is the core of our existence and we live our lives to worship and honor Him.

He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. Colossians 1:17

In Him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28

One place this can happen is during weekly worship. At various ages there are things you can do to help your child understand what worship is all about. At every age, from the time they are born, **the most important thing you can do is to bring them. Every week.** Model for them that going to church is not an option or a decision we make week to week, but just a part of who we are as Christians.

Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Exodus 20:8

Let the children come to me and do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 19:14

Parenting young children during a worship service can be both a challenging and rewarding task. **Don't get discouraged** on those few days when you may wonder why you came and if you got anything out of the service because you had to spend so much time dealing with issues with your kids. The most important thing is to come and to keep coming.

Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

Let them see that your primary focus in worship is to worship God, participating as much as you can in what is going on in the service. Reflect to them that worshipping our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is a privilege and response to all He has done for us. Let them see you wholeheartedly singing the hymns and liturgy; standing when the congregation stands, especially when the gospel is being read; listening attentively to the sermon, receiving the Lord's body and blood in His Supper with joy, bowing reverently in prayer.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. Psalm 29:2

Come before Him with joyful songs. Psalm 100:1

Consider sitting towards the front of the sanctuary rather than in the "traditional" back pews. In doing this you allow your child more opportunity to see what is happening and why we are there rather than just being lost behind too many heads. You will find many children eager to sit closer to the front. There are still easy exits if necessary.

Infant to Age 2:

At this stage, know that you will be much more sensitive to the noises your child makes than anyone around you. As early as 6 months, but certainly between the ages of 1 and 2, you can begin to help them participate with you in little ways. Call their attention to:

- when the bells ring that church is starting
- when acolytes are lighting the candles
- when pastor is reading the Bible
- when we are praying

- when we are singing
- when a baby is being baptized
- when you are giving your offering to Jesus (or let them put it in for you)
- when they have opportunity to go with you to the communion rail for a blessing from the pastor

Ages 3-5:

When they are 3-5 continue to bring their attention the things that are happening in the worship service, but you can also begin teaching and encouraging them to be more actively involved:

- standing when the gospel is being read,
- participating in the children's message
- being quiet and respectful when we are praying
- saying "Amen" and other simple responses at appropriate times during the liturgy and prayers
- joining in the Lord's Prayer (teach your child the Lord's Prayer and other regular parts of the service at home to make them more familiar with them and more comfortable trying to join in)
- looking up hymn numbers
- model how to follow a hymn verse by verse encouraging them to sing even if they can't read or don't sing the "right words"
- listening during the sermon for when the pastor says a certain word, like "Jesus"
- bring a Bible story book with them to look at, especially at sermon time
- make use of the children's bulletins that are available and based on the Bible readings for that Sunday.

Ages 6-8

By age 6-8 they are certainly ready to participate even more. They can:

- stand and sit at all times with the congregation
- begin to participate in the liturgy
- follow in the bulletin or listen as God's word is being read
- fold hands and bow head in prayer
- sing the hymns
- be taught to tithe with an allowance and be encouraged to use this to give their own offering to their Lord

Ages 9 and up

At this point your child should be encouraged and expected to participate in all the ways you do, apart from being able to receive Holy Communion. That is a next step you can continue to encourage them to look forward to. To help encourage them with listening to the sermon, use the bulletin or consider giving them a notebook to jot words, phrases, or questions they may have of things they heard the pastor talk about in the sermon. (Don't be afraid to try this out for yourself as well.) These are things that may be discussed back at home when worship is over.

Once your child is confirmed, it is as important as ever for them to be in worship every week. They are now able to participate in the worship service in every way including the blessing of receiving the body and blood of their Lord Jesus Christ in Holy Communion assuring them of the forgiveness of their sins.

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*

1 Corinthians 11:26

This is also their transition to becoming adult members of the congregation and joyfully worshipping God for the rest of their lives and into eternity "with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven". This is our ultimate hope and prayer for our children as Christian parents.

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10

As you model and encourage both the attitudes and actions of true worship, the more joyful and meaningful their (and your) worship experience will be.

Encouraging Children in Worship



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All scripture references are from the English Standard Version of the Bible