

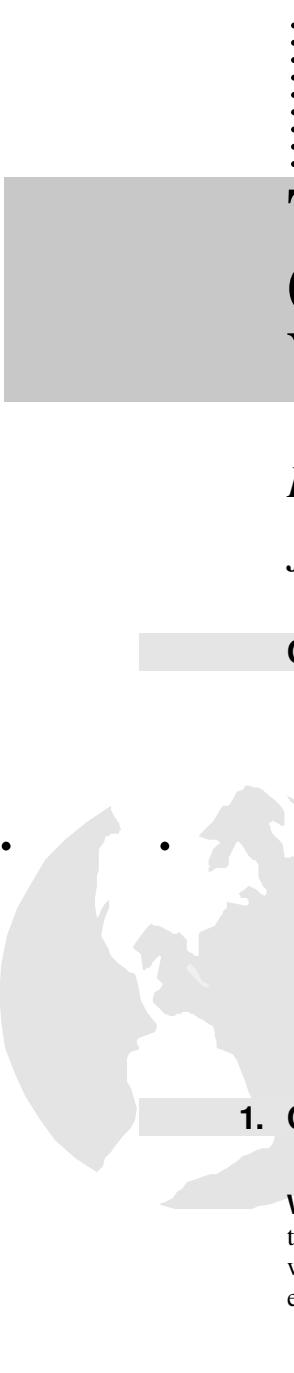
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Covenant Presbyterian Church

TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN TO WORSHIP



*Eric Mullinax, Associate Pastor
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At Covenant Presbyterian Church we encourage parents to bring their young children with them into the worship service. We believe that God intends for families to worship together. This reflects our understanding of the covenant relationship that exists between God and His people. Children are part of the covenant community, and God calls upon His covenant people to corporately come before Him in worship. We provide a nursery to assist those with babies. But we encourage parents to bring their children into the service at as early an age as possible. We hope that what follows will help parents to properly train their children to worship the Lord in a manner that will allow everyone present to focus upon offering to the Lord the worship that is rightfully His.

1. Children Should Be Taught The Meaning Of “Worship”

Worship is “giving to God all that belongs to Him,” whether it be praise, honor, prayer, thanksgiving, or ourselves.” Children need to understand that we come into the sanctuary to worship the Lord in a manner pleasing to Him. If a child believes that he is there to be entertained or for his personal enjoyment, the war is lost before the battle has begun.

2. Children Should Be Taught to Sit Quietly

This is terribly difficult but well worth the effort. CPC provides an area in the balcony, humorously referred to as the “Sky Box,” where parents and their children can see and hear the service and yet not unnecessarily disturb others while the parents are training their children to sit quietly. Prior to worship, encourage your children to use the restroom and to get a brief drink of water. Then, except for emergencies, do not let them get up and leave the sanctuary during the service! Children should not be bribed to remain quiet. Neither should parents become impatient while their children are learning to sit quietly. A child may at first need to be repeatedly taken outside for discipline, but “this too will pass.” Do not be concerned about what others may think when you find it necessary to repeatedly leave the service because of an obviously distressed toddler. Most pastors and mature believers delight

in knowing that proper biblical instruction and training is taking place. Obviously, for such training and instruction to take place it is advisable that children sit with their families.

3. Children Should Be Taught The Fundamental Elements of Worship

- **PRAYERS OF PREPARATION AND RESPONSE:** Worship begins with asking God to forgive our sins and prepare us for worship.
- **CALL TO WORSHIP AND SONGS OF PRAISE:** God calls upon us to worship Him and in response we sing songs of praise throughout the service.
- **INVOCATION:** We ask for His presence and blessing upon our efforts to worship Him in a worthy manner.
- **PROFESSION OF FAITH:** We recite together a statement of belief.
- **PRAYER & SCRIPTURE READING:** During the service we speak to God in prayer and God speaks to us as the Scripture is read, teaching us what we should believe and how we should live.
- **SERMON:** The Sermon explains the meaning and application of a specific portion of God's Word.
- **BENEDICTION:** God, through the minister, pronounces His blessing upon us, as we prepare to live our lives before a watching world.
- **SPECIAL MUSIC:** During a service the congregation has opportunity to use the God-given talents of particular individuals to offer up to God a sacrifice of praise. Though there may be necessary variety in the order of our worship, these items are found in almost every service.

4. Children Should Be Taught That "Worship" Is A Verb

Children need to understand that worship is work and requires their active participation. First, teach them to say "Amen" at the end of any response that is led by another, be it a prayer or a song. Other common responses are the Apostles' Creed, the Gloria Patri, the Doxology, and the Lord's Prayer. If they can read, then share a hymnbook, Bible or bulletin with them. Again, you must do these things well and with enthusiasm before your children will do them at all.

5. Children Should Be Taught To Bring An Offering To The Lord

If they have an allowance or money of their own, they should be required to give a portion back to God. It would be good if they didn't give it all in one lump sum, but apportioned it according to the weeks in the month, so that they aren't empty-handed when

it's time to place a gift in the offering plate. As they give their money remind them that they are once more giving themselves to God. It might be best not to give the little ones their money too soon, for inevitably, if required to hold it for any length of time, they will drop it or be distracted by it.

6. Children Should Be Taught To Sing Loudly

Dads especially need to sing with gusto. You are the chief example in the area of music. Worship is not "hurt" by discordant notes. But worship is "weakened" by those who obviously refuse to offer to God hymns of praise.

7. Children Should Be Encouraged To Take Sermon Notes

The sermon outline found in the bulletin can be used. If that is too ambitious, then ask the child to draw a picture concerning the subject on which the pastor is talking. For example, if the subject is Baptism, let him draw someone being baptized. If the sermon is on Jesus as the Shepherd, have him draw a lamb. If that is too ambitious, ask the child to draw the church, or the pastor, or the piano. There is a "**Worship Service Note Guide for Children**" available on the back wall of the sanctuary that can be used for this purpose. If taught from an early age, you will be amazed at what they learn and how soon they learn it. Just a bit of content remembered or heard, if a reflection of God's Word, can be used by the Lord to accomplish great things.

8. Children Should Be Instructed About Worship During Family Devotions

Saturday may be a good time to "walk through" the service. If corporate worship is important, and it is, then it is worth running through and practicing with your children.

9. Inquire

Ask "veteran" parents what they did in teaching their young children to worship.

A good book on this subject, available on CPC's Book Shelf, is *Parenting in the Pew, Guiding Your Children into the Joy of Worship*.

10. Pray!

Pray for your own attitude and approach to worship. Remember that your children will instinctively do what you do. Pray that worship for your children will not be turned into weariness because of a lack of knowledge or the example of a dad or mom not enthusiastically involved in the worship of our Lord and King..