

Ten Ways

FOR FAMILIES TO ENGAGE KIDS IN WORSHIP



“Children learn through observation, but they learn best through participation. We take them to church so that being part of a church family and gathering regularly to worship God in community with others becomes part of the fabric of their lives” (Karen Deboer, *Home Grown Handbook for Christian Parenting*, Faith Alive, p. 187).

As you look for ways to make worship as meaningful as possible for your child, here are 10 things to keep in mind.

1 BE POSITIVE

Instead of saying, “We have to go to church” say “we get to go to worship.” Teach your kids that worship isn’t just a place we go, it’s something we are able to *do*. You might also set a positive tone by adding words like the ones *Parenting in the Pew* author Robbie Castleman used with her kids: “Jesus must be so excited! It’s his special day!”

2 MAKE SUNDAY SPECIAL

Create patterns that help your whole family experience Sabbath rest and anticipation. Set out clothes the night before and set the alarm a little earlier so that you can arrive at worship in a peaceful state of mind. As you get ready, play your family’s favorite worship music and sing together.

3 TAKE ALONG WORSHIP TOOLS

It can be difficult to sit quietly for a long period of time—especially when you’re little! Take along tools that will engage your children in worship rather than simply keep them busy. Some ideas: a children’s storybook Bible, a small clipboard with a finger labyrinth for prayer (search flamecreativekids.blogspot.com), a small notebook and colored pencil for drawing/writing questions, impressions, and prayers (visit prayingincolor.com for info). **Tip:** Invite your child to decorate a blank journal to use as their worship journal. Read through it together after worship.

4 LET KIDS CHOOSE THE SEATS

Parents with young children often sit toward the back of the worship space so they won’t be embarrassed by their children’s behavior and can exit easily. But often children prefer the front because they can see, hear, and participate better.

5 FOLLOW ALONG

Help your child look up the Scripture passage and follow along in the Bible when it is read. If your child enjoys looking through a children's Bible storybook, bring that along for your child to read as well, but wait to bring it out until the message begins so that your child will participate in the other parts of worship.

6 BECOME A "CHURCH WHISPERER"

Help kids stay engaged during worship by whispering questions or making observations. During a song, whisper, "My favorite verse of this song is the third one. Which part do you like the best?" As Scripture is read, ask your child how it would feel to be living in that story, or suggest that they squeeze your hand when they hear Jesus' name.

7 GIVE TOGETHER

Find out a week in advance which cause the offering will support. Pray and learn about that cause together during the week. If your child receives an allowance, build into it money they can give during worship. Consider providing your child with a special envelope designated for that purpose and inviting your child to decorate the envelope with their best drawing as a reminder that we give God our best.

8 CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENTS

As a member of God's family, it's important for your child to be present at the celebrations of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Try to provide your child with an up-close view during baptism, and welcome the newest member together after the service. Use a rainy day to make some "Welcome to God's Family" cards together and send them when a new baby is baptized.

Whether or not your child fully participates in the Lord's Supper, he or she *is* experiencing it. Enfold children who aren't participating by whispering what you are remembering as you eat and drink, and reminding them "Jesus loves you too!" For ideas on preparing your child for the Lord's Supper, visit our Welcoming Children to the Lord's Supper toolkit at crcna.org/faithformation/toolkits.

9 TALK ABOUT WORSHIP ON THE WAY HOME

Ask kids about what they saw and heard in worship. Affirm their insights and encourage them to learn more. Ask if they wonder about anything that was said. As you talk, use the language of worship to build your children's vocabulary.

10 PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Make regular church attendance a family priority. Worshiping with God's people is the best way to help your children feel that church is a place where they belong.

The Faith Formation Ministries team is available to consult and brainstorm with you on these ideas and more. We'd also love to hear your faith formation stories so that we can share them with others. You'll find our contact information at crcna.org/FaithFormation.



crcna.org/FaithFormation

© 2016 Faith Formation Ministries, 1700 28th Street S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407; phone 1-800-333-8300.