

Ten Ways

FOR FAMILIES TO ENGAGE KIDS IN WORSHIP

We at Northwest Baptist Church practice a blended model of parenting in the pew. In a nutshell this looks like children worshipping alongside their parents in “big church,” then being dismissed for an age-appropriate lesson during the sermon time.

Why is a blended model better than age-appropriate pull-out only programs for children?

- Long-term studies have shown that children who worship with their families are more likely to remain in church than those who are solely in age-specific programs
- Children learn best by doing – they look to their parents and caregivers to be their examples
- Worshipping together is a great way to engage children in conversations about spiritual things. Asking questions about a song or a sermon can teach valuable truths in a very real way.
- Parents are called to be the primary disciplers of their children. We want to honor and respect that by worshipping together with our families

As you look for ways to make worship as meaningful as possible for your child, here are 10 helpful tips & ideas:

1 Be Positive

Instead of saying, “We have to go to big 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 notebook and colored pencil for drawing/writing questions, impressions, and prayers (visit prayingincolor.com for ideas). 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. Don’t worry about your children behaving perfectly. Our congregation is practicing “grace,” so this is good for all of us. Focus on coming into the presence of God.

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

Talk about in advance what the offering will support in our church. Pray about it 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 Special Events

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. 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!"

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.