

Suggestions for Helping Your Child Worship

(adapted from Bethlehem Baptist Church)

Sometimes the difference between *enduring* Sunday morning services and *enjoying* Sunday morning services is simply a matter of preparation and training. It is our heartfelt prayer that your child will come as a participant in the service to worship our great God. To that end, we have prepared a few suggestions that might help you lead your child to worship this morning.

1. Be prepared for worship

Sunday morning starts Saturday night—lay out clothes (find all shoes!), get offerings ready, rehearse memory verses, gather together everything you need to bring with you, etc, before Sunday morning. Keep Sunday simple—make a simple breakfast and leave the house with time to spare. Remind your child of your expectations of his behavior during the church service.

2. Be a role model for your child

Start your morning with a positive attitude, a cheerful tone, a spirit of anticipation and enthusiasm, and a heart for worship.

3. Before the service starts, walk your child through the details and go to the restroom

Look over the bulletin; point out what will be happening and how your child can participate. This may mean teaching him a phrase from a song or chorus and asking him to listen for it. You may want to pray with your child before the service starts. *Also, plan on taking your child to the restroom before the service to eliminate distractions during the service.*

4. Encourage your child to participate

By teaching your child hymns and choruses at home he will be able to participate in the service. If he cannot learn the whole hymn, teach him the refrain and signal to him when it is time to sing that part he knows. Encourage your child to sit and to stand at the appropriate times, to clap when appropriate, etc. Have your child bring an offering and place it in the basket.

5. Help your child become an active sermon 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 of long instruction, but just very short statements to focus their 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 to draw a picture of something from the sermon. (This should not be seen as time for doodling, but for active listening.) If your child is very young and has a hard time sitting for a long time, after he has listened to the sermon for a while, you may want to let your child look at 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. Keep a spiral notebook that is specifically for Sunday morning.

6. Stretch your child’s ability to sit attentively

If you have an active child, you may need to take your child out of the service part way through. Keep stretching him until he can sit through the whole service. You may need to be firm. Reaffirm positive behavior. If you know that you will need to take your child out during the service, please sit near the end of the aisle close to an exit in order to keep all distractions to a minimum.

7. Talk about the service on the way home

Speak positively with your child about the service, and ask him if he has any questions. Encourage him to share his drawings or notes.