

Have you asked yourself:

How can I help my child learn how to sit through worship?

My child cannot read. How are they supposed to feel part of the worship service?

What should I bring to the Worship service to help my child?

What should I do if my child is being disruptive?

First, prepare your child for worship

- A good night's sleep
- Breakfast
- Train (*yes, I said train*) your child to sit quietly for 20-30 minutes. This takes practice and time.
- Pack and prepare a Church bag.
- Pray. Pray for your child's heart to hear God's word.

What is a Church Bag?

A church bag is a special bag to use for Worship Service on Sundays! You will want to make this bag special!

What should I put in the church bag?

Snacks It never fails, as soon as I would walk through the church doors my kids would be hungry. I tried stuffing my kids to the brim right before we left the house, yet the moment we get to church they ask for snacks.

The best snacks to pack are mess-free finger foods that take awhile to eat. Nuts and dried fruit are great because they are the easiest to clean up. Pretzels, dry cereal, and crackers are also good as long as they don't get stepped on. With my first child, I said I would not give them a lollipop or gum during the worship service...well by the fourth child, I would bring a stash of lollipops and gum!

Notebook and Stickers A notebook is great for any age child. Older children can take sermon notes and younger children can draw. Stickers are also a great activity to keep on

hand, especially for younger kids. A great place to find little notebooks and stickers is at the Dollar Tree and in the Dollar spot at Target.

Coloring Pages and Colored Pencils

Church sermons can be quite long for a child's attention span, but many children actually pay attention better if they are drawing or coloring. I suggest crayons or colored pencils to use for coloring and writing.

Another option are those **Color Wonder markers and coloring books** because they are mess free!

The **Little Dover activity books** are great for keeping little hands busy. You can find these online or at a bookstore.

Little **books, stickers, doodle pads**, and an **Etch A Sketch**.

A quiet 'fiddle toy' This is a type of toy that will keep the child's hands busy, but is quiet. Some examples are: Wiki Sticks, stress balls, silly putty, pipe cleaners, yarn, pom poms, magnetic travel tins with scenes to create, etc.

Every couple of weeks I rotate the old activities out for some new ones to keep things fresh and interesting.

How can I help my child during Church?

- Remember that your child is watching you! Let that encourage you to direct your attention to the Lord.
- Smile at your child during the service and tell him or her how happy you are to have them worshipping with you!
- Have a "Church" bag for each child that includes things like a notebook, pencil, crayons, and Bible.
- Recognize that teaching a child to worship does NOT mean keeping them quiet and still. While it is important to teach our children respectful behavior, our goal is engagement, not silence.
- Expect your child to participate by standing when the congregation stands, reading aloud when we read aloud, and to follow along in the sermon notes.
- Throughout the week prior, pray for the worship leader, and preaching pastor. As your child invests his/her heart in the service to come, it prepares them to participate more fully.
- Ask your child to try to remember at least one thing that stood out to him or her from the sermon.

During the Sermon

Use the Children's Bulletin.

- Offer help and encouragement when needed in filling them out.
- As children develop the academic skills to read and write more easily, teach your child to use a notebook. In this notebook, have the child put the date and title of the sermon, the Bible passage, and one to three "nuggets" from the sermon.

Please note: Your children are not perfect, nor should they be expected to be. This is a training process and will take some time. There will be weeks when nothing works. Sometimes, your child needs to be temporarily removed from the service so others can worship. This may be a short time for correction and/or consequences or for the remainder of the service if the child isn't feeling well or is too out of control to continue. Do not be afraid to sit near the back, especially if you have very young children. There were some weeks my husband or I had to remove our child more than once. If you remove the loud child quickly, most people are very sympathetic and even glad when the child returns, quieted. I truly believe the effort on the front end is worth having a child who actually gets something out of and enjoys the worship experience as he/she gets older.