

How can parents assist their child in worship?

During this wonderful “window of opportunity” when children are forming their concept of and attitude toward church, parents may need to consider their child’s worship needs as priority. Parents can help form that attitude and “invite” them into participation with a little extra effort.

Speak of attending the worship service as a special opportunity. Help them to anticipate being with their family in a special experience.

Make opportunities for the child to talk with worship leaders.

Take care of basic physical needs before the worship service. Take children to the restroom and walk around a little if they have been physically inactive for a while.

Sit together as a family, especially when the child is young. This gives you the ability to guide their behavior as well as to interpret things they may not understand.

Encourage your child to stand and sit with the congregation. They may want to sit during the active part of the service then stand up when the sermon begins. Not only do they need to participate in the worship experience, but also they need the physical movement in order to sit quietly during the sermon.

Involve the child in music experiences. Help them to read the hymnal or projected words. Encourage them to learn the songs. You might sing them in the car or at home to help them become familiar with your church’s favorite songs.

Help your child to know how he or she can best join in prayer. Before worship, discuss concerns or thanks for events or people in the child’s life or your family life. Help them to know they can pray silently while others are praying aloud. Since they have a short attention span, help them to sit quietly if they finish praying before the prayer leader does.

Help your child to find the Scripture passages in his or her own Bible. Especially young readers will be eager to find the passages in their Bible.

Explain the offering to your child. Let him or her participate by placing an offering in the plate. Emphasize that it is a way we show love to God. Help them to know where the money goes and how it is used.

Make use of the children’s bulletins provided. Encourage your child to bring their worship bag or borrow a worship bag found at the entrance (please return). Include interesting paper, special pencils or markers, and perhaps a book. Children often multi-task, listening while they are occupied with an unrelated activity. Change the contents of the bag fairly often.

Prepare them for the ordinances of baptism and communion so they will understand what is occurring. Younger children, who are concrete and literal thinkers, will not understand the symbolic meaning of the ordinances, but they can understand they are important ways for people to remember Jesus and to show others that they are going to follow Jesus’ example.

Help them to listen for certain words, Bible names and places, and other simple concepts. Younger children can draw pictures of things they observe. Older children can keep simple notes. This will be a great opportunity to utilize children’s bulletin.

Before and after the service, talk with your child about the invitation response. They may be getting restless by this time. Explain that people are making important decisions about following Jesus during this time, and the children need to be patient.

Discuss the service on the way home or after you arrive home, answering questions they may have about the experiences. Ask them what they enjoyed most. Share appropriate thoughts that you may have had. Keep it short and simple.