

## WHY KEEP THEM IN CHURCH IF THEY DON'T ALWAYS UNDERSTAND IT?

FROM JOHN PIPER: “the first and most important job of a parent is to fall in love with the worship of God. Any sense of being there out of duty or being forced to or some other reason besides I love being here, kids know that and they will hate it just like you do, deep down. You can't impart what you don't possess. And this is what you want your children to catch. You want them to catch authentic worship. Authentic, heartfelt worship is the most valuable thing in human experience. Think of it. The cumulative effect of 650 worship services spent with mom and dad in authentic communion with God and his people between the ages of 4 and 17 is utterly incalculable.

The aim is that the children catch the passion for worshipping God by watching mom and dad enjoy God week after week. What would be the impact if, for twelve years, the children saw dad with his face in his hands praying during the prelude to worship? What would be the impact if they saw mom and dad beaming with joy in singing the praises of God? Just think of it. Millions and millions of children never see their parents sing, let alone sing songs with joy to a great God. Something really seems wrong to me when parents want to take their children in the most formative years and put them with other children and other adults to shape their attitude and behavior in worship rather than having them right there to shape them. Why wouldn't parents be jealous to model for their children the tremendous value that they put on joyful reverence in the presence of almighty God?

Of course, it is over their head. It is supposed to be over their head. They are beginners. The English language is over their head as soon as they come out of the womb. But we don't say: Well, let's put them with other children in their own situations and limitations so they can understand a word or two. No. We immerse them in the English language every day that they don't understand 90% of in the hope and expectation that they grow up into joyful use of the English language. Long before children understand fully what is going on in worship and what is sung and what is said, they are absorbing tremendous amounts of what is valuable.



# NEW TO THE PEW

## THEOLOGY OF INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

The children of Christian parents, as revealed in scripture, are covenant members. In view of this reality, as a community that includes children in the covenant from a very early age, we believe that worship should be as intergenerational as possible.

We encourage parents to include their children in our corporate worship as much as possible and as soon as possible. We take seriously their need to worship with us. We believe that a young child's participation in worship will make it easier for the child to learn the rhythm and lifestyle of worship in later years.

## RESOURCES FOR CHILD DISCIPLESHIP

<http://www.salempresws.org/children>

Here we have listed recommended children's Bibles and linked to some catechism resources for talking to your children about faith.

\*Thanks to Christ Moravian for sharing some of the ideas provided in this booklet.

## REASONS TO KEEP KIDS IN WORSHIP

Scripture lauds children as essential to God's people

When we baptize them, we vow to create a community where they are welcomed and cherished

We join the global church in what is a more common way

They learn by doing and watching

They will assume church is not just for adults

They will see peers be baptized and grow to communion

They can experience hospitality from adults in the church

They learn songs and prayers from hearing them

They hear the word of God read and preached

Their observations will prompt them to ask questions at home

It teaches our community to embrace children, even when distracting

We are incomplete without them and with them we more fully reflect the Kingdom of God

## STRATEGIES FOR HELPING KIDS IN WORSHIP

Practice church at home

Teach children when to stand and sit in the service so they can be a part of the embodiment of worship

Teach children songs from playlists on the SalemPres Spotify  
<https://play.spotify.com/user/salempres>

Paper or Coloring Books: Gives them something to do with their minds and hands, while still allowing them to listen

Snacks: Bring goldfish or fruit snacks to save for the sermon

Pew Kits: These small bags will be up front just before the sermon during the community update. They contain crayons and a small toy

## WHAT SHOULD PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT TYPICAL DO?

It is our desire at Salem to always be grace-centered. Our officers have put painstaking thought into how we can best serve typically developing children. We never want any parent to feel these ideals alienate them. The elders and servant leaders are eager to do whatever it takes to help families worship and to show the love of Christ to children. Please contact the elders and servant leaders to learn more. We will happily develop an approach to specifically love your child well.

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S VISION FOR A TYPICAL CHILD?

- Baptize the child into the fellowship of God's people.
- Serve the child through childcare up to age 2 so parents can worship.
- When they can sit up, walk, whisper, we encourage parents to start introducing them to the worship service. This is gradual, over years, hopefully culminating around kindergarten.
- As parents introduce preschoolers to worship, they can also introduce children's Bibles, worship music, and catechisms in conversations in the home. Parent engagement is by far the greatest factor influencing a child's adult faith.
- The church also provides Sunday School from K-12 to compliment the primary discipleship at home.
- When a child expresses an understanding of God, Christ's work to redeem our sin, and the Spirit's presence, they should contact the elders about taking communion. Ages range WIDELY for this.