

Ten Ways

FOR FAMILIES TO ENGAGE KIDS IN WORSHIP



Worshipping regularly with God's people is the best way to help children understand that church is a place where they belong. As children engage in worship as active participants they learn about God, God's people, and God's Word, growing in faith with all generations of their church community.

As parents and caregivers look for ways to make worship an active and meaningful experience for children, here are 10 things to keep in mind.

1. BE POSITIVE

Instead of saying, "We have to go to church" say "We get to go to worship. God invites us and God wants us to be there!" Teach your kids that worship isn't just a place we go, it's something we do with God's family. When we're not there, God's family isn't complete.

2. MAKE SUNDAY SPECIAL

Create patterns that help your whole family experience Sabbath rest and anticipation. Establish signposts that serve as reminders that you're entering Sabbath, such as a shared meal, lighting a candle, or singing a special song. Be intentional about leaving enough time to get ready for church so that you can arrive at worship in a peaceful state of mind. Consider creating a Sunday morning playlist that you can listen to as you get ready or make your way to church to prepare your hearts for worship.

3. TAKE ALONG WORSHIP TOOLS

It can be difficult to sit quietly for a long period of time—especially when you're little! Ask your children what they need to engage in worship, remembering to keep that as the goal rather than simply keeping them busy. Some suggestions you can start with are a children's storybook Bible, a small clipboard with a finger labyrinth for prayer, or a small notebook and colored pencil for drawing/writing questions, impressions, and prayers (visit prayingincolor.com for info). Coloring books, fidget toys, and sticker books can also be helpful things for children to engage with while they are listening to parts of the service. As you explore what will help your children engage in worship, ask yourself the same question and model bringing along tools that help you to worship.

4. BE MINDFUL ABOUT THE WORSHIP SPACE

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 children may be able to see, hear, and participate better closer to the front of the worship space. Decide together as a family what part of the sanctuary will help you to participate in worship, and choose seats that match your needs.

5. FOLLOW ALONG

Help your children look up the Scripture passage and follow along when it is read, making sure to use the same Bible translation your church reads from so that it's easy for new readers to follow. If your children enjoy looking through a children's Bible, bring it along for them to read as well, but wait to bring it out until the message begins so that your children will participate in the other parts of worship.

6. ENCOURAGE INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Meaningful intergenerational relationships are an important part of forming lifelong faith in children. Find ways to connect your children with spiritually mature adults in your congregation as mentors or simply friends. Consider if there are trusted adults who are willing to sit with your children during the service as a simple way to build relationships within your faith community.

7. GIVE TOGETHER

Find out the designated offering for the following Sunday. Pray and learn about that cause together during the week. If your children receive an allowance, build into it money they can give during worship. Consider providing your children with a special envelope designated for that purpose and inviting them to decorate the envelope with their best drawing as a reminder that we give God our best. Talk with your children about how they can give things other than money to the church, such as their time by volunteering or supporting the church in a certain way.

8. CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENTS

As a member of God's family, it's important for your children to be present at the celebrations of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Try to provide your children with an up-close view during baptism, and welcome the newest member together after the service.

Whether or not your children fully participate in the Lord's Supper, they are 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!" For ideas on preparing your children for the Lord's Supper, visit our Welcoming Children to the Lord's Supper toolkit at crcna.org/faithformation/toolkits.

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 ("sermon," "confession," "call to worship," etc.) to build your children's vocabulary.

10. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Regularly practice Sabbath as a family. Spend your Sundays worshiping with God's people, resting as a family, and engaging in other spiritual practices. Celebrate God's abundance with a delicious family dinner, spend some time in nature acknowledging God's beautiful creation, or practice gratitude by listing how God provided for you in the past week.

This resource has been developed by Thrive. If you have questions or would like support in ministry, please email thrive@crcna.org.

