

Do Children Bother You When You Preach?

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On occasion, I am asked the questions, “Can you really see what is going on in the pews?” And, “Do babies and little children bother you when you are preaching?”

The answers to these two questions are yes and no. Yes, I can see what is going on. No, the children do not bother me.

I remember what Tom Holland told us young preacher students when we were in Preparation and Delivery of Sermons at Freed-Hardeman University: “What would you do if you were two years old, and everyone and everything around you was bigger than you? You would twist around, and crane your neck, and fidget all over the place to see what was going on!”

To me, babies and little children represent the future of the church. They say to visitors that this congregation has a bright future, at least in potential. As Wimpy Jones said, “I would rather hear babies crying than old men snoring.” All of us have been there at one time or another, and we can all sympathize with mothers or fathers who are doing their best to control little children in worship, children who cannot understand why we are doing this or that, or why that fella (namely, me) is speaking longer than a TV cartoon segment (about fifteen minutes).

As parents, we need to have as our goal the development of our children’s love for God. We can do this by teaching them why and how to worship God. Following are some excellent suggestions that we can use to involve our children in worship and help them in understanding what it means to worship God. (I am indebted to John Vaughn for the idea of this article, as well as for these following suggestions. I am indebted to my

wife for instilling within our boys the behavior they hopefully exhibit in worship. She almost always had this task alone, as I was preaching!)

- **Prepare children.** Before Sunday, tell them what will be going on in worship, and why we sing, pray, preach, give, and partake of the Lord's supper.
- **Involve children.** When we sing or read the Bible, help them locate the song/passage in the book. Then, point out the words as we sing/read.
- **Sit close up.** Some may think that they need to sit in the back so as not to disturb others. There may be times for this (e.g., sickness), but why not sit up at the front so children can see and hear what is going on in the worship?
- **Express joy in worshipping God.** Children will pick up on the attitudes you have in worship and will imitate them, good or bad. I've observed that worship patterns (frequency of attendance, singing or not singing, and such) are readily imitated by children as they grow up.
- **Be patient.** Children are not adults and should not be expected to act as adults. Help them to worship God on their level of understanding. —Don Williams