

CORPORATE WORSHIP

Children as Active Participants

God has given us the unique blessing and calling to gather together in corporate worship. The purpose of this packet is to share what worship is designed to be, how God calls all believers to corporate worship, and how you as a parent can disciple your child to be an active participant in worship!

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF WORSHIP?

“Worship that glorifies God is worship that transforms the worshiper” (Castleman).

- We worship what we love the most.
- *“We share what we love the most with our kids”* (Helopoulos).

We are active members of the body of Christ.

- 1 Corinthians 12
- Hebrews 10:24-25
- Psalm 145

We are covenant members of the community.

- Acts 2:42-47
- Ephesians 4:24-25

Worship celebrates what Christ has done.

- *“Christ’s atonement of our sins and restoration of our relationship with Him is the Biblical basis for worship”* (Webber).



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- Hebrews 1:3
- Colossians 1:15-19
- Philippians 2:9-11

Worship helps believers to fix their eyes on Jesus, the Author and perfecter of our faith.

- Hebrews 12:1-2

Believers are called to bring glory to God.

- 2 Chronicles 16:28-29
- Exodus 20:3 - No other gods
- Revelation 4:11 - Worthy are you, Lord
- Isaiah 43:5-7 - Whom I created for my glory

We are called to put our faith into action.

- Deuteronomy 31:9-13
- *"If green beans and broccoli are worth the struggle, a season or two of difficulty in the pew is more than worth it"* (Helopoulos).

We are called to worship the Lord with gladness.

- Psalm 100:1-2
- Psalm 122:1



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WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL MODEL FOR ALL BELIEVERS PARTICIPATING IN WORSHIP?

Believers are called to worship and meet together.

- Ezra 10:1
- Joel 2:15-16
- Hebrews 10:23-25

Parents are called to model worship and follow Christ.

- Deuteronomy 6
- Psalm 78
- Ephesians 6
- Colossians 3:16-17

We, as parents, have committed to raising our children. As believers, we must recognize the weight of discipling our children and the commitment we have made.

- Parenting is a season, just like other seasons of life. Honor God in this season and do what He has called you to do, which is to shepherd and disciple your children.
- Ecclesiastes 3
- Deuteronomy 11:19



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“Our children benefit by being where the Word is preached, the sacraments (ordinances) are administered, and corporate prayer is practiced. These are the chief means by which God pours out grace upon His people.” (Kevin DeYoung)

- Romans 10:14
- Matthew 28:19-20
- Acts 2:42-47

In the Bible, children were active participants in Passover and other feasts.

- Deuteronomy 12
- Leviticus 23

Children need to see faith in action. They need to see the various ages worshipping together and recognize church is not just classes specifically designed for their level of learning.



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HANDY TIPS & RESOURCES

What ages are we talking about here?

- At Waterloo, all children in 2nd Grade and up attend Connect Group one hour and worship with the body of Christ during the other session. This allows them to experience the challenge and encouragement that comes from being in fellowship with believers of various ages and spiritual maturity.
- Kindergarten and First Graders have the option to spend both sessions in the Childhood Ministry program or attend Connect Group one session and corporate worship one hour. Many students in this age range are able to actively participate in the entire worship service. Some Kindergarten and First Graders may need to go to both sessions in the Childhood Ministry and transition throughout the year to fully engaging in corporate worship. One way this can occur is to attend corporate worship for the music portion of the service and then attend Childhood programming for the remainder of the service. As the child matures, they can begin attending the full worship session, which is especially beneficial as they begin to ask questions about salvation.
- Older Preschoolers (3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds) can begin this process of preparing for attending corporate worship by



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attending part or all of the music portion and then returning to the Childhood programming. Some older preschoolers may be able to stay engaged during the entire service.

- Every child's developmental and spiritual growth occurs at slightly different rates. The end goal is being able to stay in worship as an active participant. Choosing the exact timing of achieving this goal should be done with prayer and grace.
- Two great books for parents on this journey are *Parenting in the Pew* by Robbie Castleman and *Let the Children Worship* by Jason Helopoulos.

What is the purpose of Kindergarteners and First Graders having the option of attending Childhood programming for both sessions?

Giving parents the option for children of these ages to attend two sessions is one avenue we use to connect people to Jesus. Specifically, classes for Kindergarten and First Graders are designed for integrating new families into our church. As families become comfortable, the goal is for children to begin attending worship with their families.



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We believe the best place for your child is to be next to you in worship so they can be active participants in the corporate community of worship. Otherwise, children are consistently surrounded by their peers who are on similar spiritual developmental levels and miss out on the challenge and encouragement that comes from being in fellowship with believers of more spiritual maturity.

What are some practical tips for engaging my child in worship during music?

- Have them stand quietly or stand and sing during the music.
- Honor God by singing or by listening to the words being sung.
- Remind them what it means to sing in worship. We are proclaiming who God is and what He has done.
- Have them stand in their chair if they are not tall enough to see.
- Sing quietly in their ears to help them know what to sing.
- Practice singing worship songs with them outside of church.
- Sing while you drive, before you pray at mealtimes, at bedtime, and while playing.
- Have Family Worship throughout the week.
- Check the churchwide weekly newsletter for the song list for the upcoming week and practice them throughout the week.



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What are some practical tips for engaging my child in worship during the sermon?

- Have them use worship notes, which are located in the back of the sanctuary. Write down what they hear! Worship notes are designed to fit kids' grades and abilities.
- Have them bring their Bible and turn in their Bible to the passage. Help them find it. Bible literacy is a skill that we all need to hone. If you are searching for a Bible on your child's reading level, some great options are the Grace Bible for Kids (CSB) or the Explorer Bible for Kids (CSB), both published by Lifeway, or the Adventure Bible (NIV or NIV) published by ZonderKidz.
- Fidgets are a valuable resource. If your kid needs to have something in their hands to "fidget" with while they listen, let them. Just help them know boundaries to keep it from being a distraction to them or others around them.
- Doodling on the side of worship notes is also a great way to keep hands busy and the mind engaged. You will be surprised by how much a kid is absorbing even when it may look like they are distracted or not engaged.
- Answer questions. Have them whisper the question to you if they can't write it down so that you can write it down to discuss later.
- Do not allow children the distraction of technology. Help them find the joy of participating in corporate worship rather than entertainment from a screen.



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What are some practical tips for engaging my child in worship during the invitation?

- Use the time to pray with your child, whether in the pew or on the steps.
- Use the time to pray as a family.
- Use the time to pray as a couple and allow your child to see that.
- Actively sing with them.
- Have them stand when we are standing and sit when we are sitting.
- Do not let your kids go to the bathroom during invitation. This is a time of response to what we have heard during corporate worship. Many kids leave during the invitation because they are avoiding the conviction of the Holy Spirit. They don't just have the sudden urge to use the restroom.



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What are some other practical tips for preparing my kid to be in the worship service?

- Show enthusiasm for being able to worship as a family.
- Pray the night before and talk about how excited you are to worship together as a family.
- Sit closer to the stage.
- Sitting closer to the front reduces the number of distractions for your children during service.
- The balcony signals to a child that they are in a separate space that isn't actively participating in worship. Plus, lighting up there isn't conducive to kids trying to read/see their Bibles.
- The farther away from screens and the stage, the harder it is for kids to see.
- Go to the restroom before service, whether they think they need to or not.
- Sign your family up to help with a task. Be an active part of serving. This helps your child know they have an active role to play in the church body. Some options could include: greeting people coming into the sanctuary, straightening chairs, refilling Worship Notes, and picking up trash.
- Continue the conversation at lunch or on the drive home.



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I'm concerned about my kid being in church because they might be a distraction to others and me. Kids can be wiggly, loud, etc. What are your thoughts on that topic?

- Your children are not viewed as a distraction here at Waterloo. They are valued participants of our church.
- Remember, worship is not about us but about glorifying God and showing children how to glorify God.
- Everyone gets a little wiggly at some point, even adults. Here are some practical tips for building up attention spans.
 - ♦ Start small. Begin bringing your preschooler to the music portion of worship.
 - ♦ Read books together. This helps your kids develop longer attention spans.
 - ♦ Read a chapter out of the Bible and have your elementary kids practice writing down some thoughts of what they heard or learned.
- A silent church is a dying church.
- *"Students are 90 percent more likely to stay in church if they liked their pastor while growing up"* (James Swain). Start building this relationship early by being present in corporate worship where they can see and hear their pastor often.



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BOOK LIST

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- Helopoulos, Jason. *Let the Children Worship*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2016.
- Kennedy, Jared, and Trish Mahoney. *God Made Me for Worship: Helping Children Understand Church*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2020.
- Magruder, Jana. *Nothing Less*. Nashville, TN: Life Christian Resources, 2017.
- Parr, Steve R, and Crites, Tom. *Why They Stay: Helping Parents and Church Leaders Make Investments that Keep Children and Teens Connected to the Church for a Lifetime*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2015.
- Swain, James. "Strengthen: Factors for Church Faithfulness | Baptist Messenger of Oklahoma." Baptist Messenger, January 22, 2018. <https://www.baptistmessenger.com/strengthen-factors-for-church-faithfulness/>.
- Webber, Robert E., *Worship Is a Verb: Eight Principles for Transforming Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 203-204.



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SERMON NOTES & OTHER RESOURCES

Sermon Notes Books for Kids

Truth Steps Publishing

Digging into God Series

United Publishing

Seeds Family Worship: <https://www.seedsfamilyworship.com/>

Helpful Articles & Podcasts:

<https://churchleaders.com/children/childrens-ministry-articles/261362-5-reasons-children-main-service-regularly.html>

<https://eccelmira.org/articles/keeping-children-in-the-worship-service/>

<https://foundationworldview.com/blog/forcing-kids-to-go-to-church>

<https://herviewfromhome.com/motherhood-taking-kids-to-church-is-hard-but-holy-work/>

<https://research.lifeway.com/2022/07/29/why-we-need-children-in-church/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bring-children-worship/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/children-worship-plan/>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/should-children-sit-through-big-church> <https://churchanswers.com/blog/be-the-church-that-embraces-children-not-just-tolerates-them/>

