

# Children's Church?

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**O**ver the years I have been asked about my thoughts on congregations providing nursery care for young parents during the worship service. In some places this is called "children's church." When asked, my answer is usually, "We encourage parents to have their children sit with them during the worship service so they can begin learning about the importance of giving reverence to God." Most of the time this is received kindly and I can only think of once where the person I spoke with looked at me like I had been living in complete isolation since childhood. In fact in many places "children's church" is just part of the normal scheme of things and anything else appears to be strange. There is little doubt that our congregation stands out in that we do not offer a "children's church."

Being a father of small children, part of me understands the reasoning behind a desire for having a special place for young children to go during the worship service. My wife has often had a "double task" as I am usually preaching while she's busy making sure our children behave during worship service. I cannot count the times she has told me that she was not able to hear all of my lesson because of having to take one or both children to the back for discipline. I know we're no different from other young families! Perhaps you have wondered, "why should I even bother to come, I won't get anything out of the lesson, because I'll be busy tending to little Johnnie or Susie." Don't fall prey to that line of reasoning! Neglecting worship services will only cause your problem to be worse down the road. Use the time you have NOW to train them how to behave in worship! NOW is the time to start training them for serving God!

I also understand how it can be perceived by young parents that others in the congregation are displeased with a child crying during worship. I remember myself grumbling, "don't they remember what it was like to have small children???" But, I have come to believe that this is simply

Another point: discipline in the worship service will be meaningless if discipline is not carried out in the home! Strive to the best of your ability to be consistent in discipline. See Ephesians 6:1-4. Parenting is a fulltime job!

Some seek to justify "children's church" as a time to "train children for the eventual transition to the adult preaching service." Why can't the parents do this? Isn't this part of "training children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?" (Eph 6:4) Isn't it the job of the parents to teach their children to sit still for 2-3 hours per week? This is NOT an impossible task! Too many parents today are willing to shed the responsibility for raising their children. Too many are content to let daycare centers; grandparents; coaches; and schools raise their children. So it should not be totally surprising to see the trend carried over into places of worship! In essence, advocates of a "children's church" concept are saying, let us teach your children how to worship and you won't have to worry about it."

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NOT the case. Most brethren understand and remember the trials of being a young parent very well. I believe if there is any displeasure from others about a child crying during worship it stems from a parent not doing anything to correct the misbehavior of the child. Yes, that can be frustrating! Remember parents, YOU are the PARENT, THEY are the CHILD! You are in control—not them. Don't let them "call the shots." Make your child sit quietly during worship! Nothing is more disturbing to those sitting around you when children are allowed to roam the aisles and run across pews. It's too bad if they don't like sitting down. If they begin to fuss and cry, take them to the back, administer discipline, bring them back, and sit them down. Repeat as often as necessary. They'll get the picture. What if you don't "get anything out of the lesson?" Pick up a CD or cassette of the lesson and listen in the privacy of your home after the kids have gone to bed. Even if you heard little of the sermon, you still came out ahead in teaching your children how to behave in worship.

part of a congregation where the building is filled with laughter, noise, and joy of children. If you've ever worshipped in a congregation where no children are present, the silence is deafening! Some places are as dreary as a funeral home. That's certainly not the case here! Children can be a sign of a healthy, alive, and vibrant congregation!

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Young parents, thanks for the extra effort you make to be present at worship services! Getting up early, feeding, dressing your child, changing dirty diapers, and then tending to self can be a daunting task on a Sunday morning! Your effort does not go unnoticed by your brethren—but most importantly—by God! Keep up the good work!

*Matthew Allen  
mhallen@sbcglobal.net*