



Parent Meeting

Sept. 1, 2010

Mission Statement: "Partnering with parents in leading kids to walk in the light."

Theme Verse: 1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

"In the Light" Values:

- Partnering with parents in making disciples of Christ.
Eph. 6:4: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."
- Depending on God in prayer to do what He alone can do.
Eph. 3:20: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... "
- Protecting children with an uncompromising safety process.
Neh. 4:9: " ... we prayed to our God and posted a guard... "
- Creating an exciting and fun learning environment with excellence.
Col. 3:23: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."
- Affirming leaders to use their God-given gifts.
1 Thess. 5:11: " ... encourage one another and build each other up ... "

Partnering with parents

1. Praying with parents for their children's salvation and spiritual growth.
2. Reinforcing what parents are already teaching at home.
3. Communicating with parents what their children are learning at church, so they can "take the baton" and continue teaching it at home.
4. Providing an atmosphere where the family can attend church together.
5. Challenging families to memorize God's Word together.

Bible Translation

There is no "official Cornerstone Bible translation" we are to use in children's ministry. However, with Bob now preaching from the ESV, we now encourage those purchasing a new Bible to get an ESV, to better be able to follow along during the service. Teachers in children's ministry are not expected to use any particular translation, but the kids will be encouraged to memorize their Sunday and Wednesday verses in the ESV.

Memorization

The kids memorize a variety of verses in children's ministry. Memorization can help us in a variety of ways:

1. Obedience to Scripture
2. Conformity to Christ
3. Victory over sin
4. Confident evangelism
5. Encouraging other believers
6. Wisdom in different situations
7. Parenting
8. Becoming disciplined
9. Deeper knowledge of Scripture

While we encourage the kids to memorize, let's lead by example and memorize right along with them!

Curriculum

Sundays

For our 3-year-olds through 6th graders, we are leading them through the Bible every three years. That way, throughout those nine years, kids will study through the Bible three times. Our 3's, 4's and K-5's will be using Discipleland curriculum, while the 1st-6th graders will learn from Generations of Grace.

Wednesdays

Our Wednesday curriculum is as follows:

*The 3's and 4's: Discipleland—The Sunday focus will be on the Old Testament, while the Wednesday focus will be on the New Testament.

*K-5th Grades: TruthQuest—Every five weeks, the kids will be studying different series topics. Some this year include, "Love Your Neighbor," "In all Circumstances," and "Living Christmas."

*6th Grade: Foundations (first six Be A weeks) and Everything You Need to Know To Teenager. This year-long study includes lessons on Bible doctrines and what a Christ-follower looks like.

"Connect" Ministry (Thursdays 12:00-3:00)



Every Thursday this school year, we will host a Bible education ministry for public school students during the school day (1:00-2:30). We are offering this to four schools in Roseville, transporting each school once a month to and from our church. This is a great ministry for many families in which to get involved.

Sunday Ministries



Our nursery ministry on Sundays and Wednesdays is offered during the ABF and service times. It is staffed with loving leaders and is in no way "glorified babysitting." Babies are rocked, sung to, and loved. The one- and two-year-olds have a structured setting of singing, Bible stories, organized playtime, and snacks.



Our Sunday 3's, 4's, and K-5's ministry is offered from 9:30-12:15. During the first hour, the Bible lesson is taught. Later, the Bible lesson is reviewed and an application lesson taught. The kids also sing together, learn verses, have a snack, and participate in organized playtime.

KBF

KBF stands for "Kids' Bible Fellowship." This 1st-5th grade ministry is offered on Sundays from 9:30-10:30. Kids participate in singing, a large-group Bible lesson, and a small-group application time with a small group leader. It's a great opportunity to connect as a group on a weekly basis.



"DiscipleTown" is offered every 2nd and 4th Sunday for 1st-3rd grade kids. All kids get to be part of the beginning of the worship service then are dismissed before the sermon. This year, kids will be studying about How to: Pray, Follow God's plan, Make good friends, and be faithful workers.



Ignite is our 6th grade ministry on Sundays (9:30-10:30) and Wednesdays. Here, 6th graders participate in worship songs, a Bible lesson, and connecting in small groups. They also have monthly activities designed for purposes of service and relationship-building. It is our desire to teach the "Igniters" to shine their lights before others in a way that points to Christ (Matt. 5:16).

Wednesday Ministries (6:45-8:15)



On Wednesdays, the 3-and 4-year-olds come to "DiscipleLand." Along with Bible lessons, the kids will be participating in singing, crafts, learning verses, and doing activities.



Truthopolis is for K-5th graders. Each week, kids participate in interactive Bible lessons, games, and skits, where Biblical truths are taught by "Blade", "Casey", "Doc", and "Reid" each week. Puppets tell some of the story to the younger kids, (K-3rd grade), and teenagers play the parts for the older kids.

General Policies

Application
Process

We are committed to the safety of the children entrusted to our care. Anyone convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse will not be permitted to serve in children's ministries at Cornerstone. The application process involves submitting an application, a background and reference check, and a possible short interview for new leaders.

Six-Month Rule

Generally, leaders must attend Cornerstone for at least six months before serving in children's ministry.

Membership

All leaders must be members of Cornerstone Baptist Church. For those not yet members, we encourage leaders to begin that process immediately beginning with the Sunday class, "Discovering God's People."

Leader Identification

All leaders must identify themselves with an "In the Light" lanyard and name badge while serving. This is to identify themselves as approved leaders to you.

Child Identification

Every child will be given a name tag, whether a regular attendee or visitor. Kids should be informed that this is not for them, but for others to get to know them.

Two-Person
Rule

At least two leaders are to be present in each room at all times. This is for the kids' and leaders' protection.

Open Door Policy

Parents who wish to observe their children in class are welcome to do so. However, they must wear a "Visitor" lanyard and be present for observation purposes only.

Safety & Security

- Check-In Procedures** Beginning at 9:15 on Sundays, adults should check in their 3-11 year-olds electronically at the check-in kiosks. This helps the church have a record of their attendance and identify the children with a nametag. Nametags should be worn so that other children and adults can call them by name. On Wednesdays, the kids check in upon arrival in their classrooms.
- Check-Out Procedures** Kids are not to be dismissed until an approved parent checks him/her out. Other family members are not allowed to check out the children unless previous arrangements were made. Please do not be offended if a leader asks for your I.D. On Sundays, 3rd-6th graders may be dismissed to meet their parents before the service. On Wednesdays, only 5th and 6th graders may be dismissed.
- Parent Reminder** Parents are expected to pick up their children within five minutes of the class ending time (by 10:35 and 12:20 on Sundays and by 8:20 on Wednesdays).
- Foods & Allergies** With a high percentage of children allergic to various foods, we must make sure that only "church-approved" snacks are served. We strive to be sensitive to those allergic to peanuts and not serve food with peanuts or foods processed in a plant that also processes peanuts at our church. Leaders will strive to contact parents before something out-of-the-ordinary is served.
- Photos** Please respect other parents of the kids in our children's ministry by not posting photos of their kids online (e.g. Facebook). Although it may seem harmless, parents may have different reasons why they prefer we not do this. The exception to this would be if permission was granted from a parent of each child in the picture.
- Communication** We will do our best to communicate how your children are doing in class, as well as any incidents in which your children may have been involved.

Discipline

(these are guidelines we set for leaders while serving in children's ministry)

Setting limits for children is essential in providing a safe and happy place for them to learn. We want to be a reflection of Christ in how we treat and speak to the kids. Misbehaving children should be dealt with accordingly with a good measure of common sense. The following are some guidelines our children's leaders go by in preventing misbehavior:

- 1) Pray for an attitude of love and acceptance of the children.
- 2) Let the children know your expectations.
- 3) Get to know the children well.
- 4) Anticipate disruptions.
- 5) Understand age appropriate limitations.
- 6) Keep children moving and active.
- 7) State the consequences of wrong actions.

When disciplining:

- 1) Be consistent.
- 2) Carry out discipline in a kind and quiet manner.
- 3) Deal with the heart, not just the behavior.
- 4) Use the child's name to refocus attention.
- 5) State positively what is expected of them.
- 6) Use age appropriate time-outs. (one minute per age of the child)
- 7) Seek help from other leaders.

Responses not allowed:

- 1) Yanking, spanking, or hitting a child.
- 2) Publicly embarrassing a child in front of others.
- 3) Telling a child he/she is "bad."
- 4) Making threats with no follow-up.
- 5) Yelling at a child.

Parent Communication:

- 1) Inform parents of BOTH positive and negative behavior.
- 2) Do not be afraid to share incidences with parents regarding their children. Parents want to know the truth of how things went with their child. Be as detailed as possible, explaining how the leaders responded to the situation.
- 3) Sometimes communicating a child's negative behavior would be better at another time less distracting or rushed.

'10-'11 Upcoming Events

Sept. 8:	Promotion Wednesday	Jun. 20-24: Lake Ann Camp (4 th -9 th)
Sept. 12:	Promotion Sunday	Jul. 5-8: Soccer Camp
Feb. 4-6:	Ignite Winter Blaze (6 th)	Jul. 18-22: VBS
Mar. 4-6:	Kidz White Out (3 rd -5 th)	



KBF Memory Verses ('10-'11)

9/12/10	John 14:15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
9/19/10	Deut. 6:5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might
9/26/10	Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
10/3/10	Joshua 1:8 This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.
10/10/10	Joshua 1:9 Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.
10/17/10	Review verses
10/24/10	Psalm 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!
10/31/10	Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own yes, but a wise man listens to advice.
11/7/10	Joshua 24:24 And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."
11/14/10	Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
11/21/10	Romans 3:24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus
11/28/10	Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
12/5/10	Review verses
12/12/10	John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
12/19/10	Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
12/26/10	Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
1/2/11	Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
1/9/11	Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
1/16/11	Review verses
1/23/11	1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
1/30/11	1 Samuel 16:7 For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."
2/6/11	Psalm 56:3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.
2/13/11	Review verses
2/20/11	1 Thessalonians 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

2/27/11	1 Thessalonians 5:15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
3/6/11	1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,
3/13/11	1 Thessalonians 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
3/20/11	Review verses
3/27/11	James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
4/3/11	Psalms 9:2 I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.
4/10/11	Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."
4/17/11	Luke 23:34 And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.
4/24/11	Romans 10:9 if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
5/1/11	Proverbs 13:20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.
5/8/11	Review verses
5/15/11	2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
5/22/11	2 Corinthians 5:15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.
5/29/11	2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
6/5/11	Review verses
6/12/11	2 Corinthians 10:5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ
6/19/11	James 1:19-20 let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God
6/27/11	Mark 8:34 "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."
7/3/11	Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
7/10/11	Review verses
7/17/11	James 4:6 God opposes the proud, but give grace to the humble.
7/24/11	James 4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?
7/31/11	James 4:2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.
8/7/11	James 4:17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
8/14/11	Review verses
8/21/11	2 Timothy 1:7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control
8/28/11	Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
9/4/11	Ephesians 5:21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ

Sunday Curriculum Schedule

2010-2011 (1st-6th Grades)

Generations of Grace

DATE	LESSON	PASSAGE	TITLE
9/12/10	D1	Deuteronomy 4	God Requires Obedience
9/19/10	D2	Deuteronomy 6	God Calls Israel to Love through Obedience
9/26/10	D3	Deuteronomy 11; 28	God Blesses for Obedience and Curses for Disobedience
10/3/10	J1	Joshua 1:1-9	God Calls Joshua to be His Servant
10/10/10	J2	Joshua 2	Rahab Shows Her Faith in God
10/17/10	J3	Joshua 3:1-5:1	God Reveals His Might at the Jordan
10/24/10	J4	Joshua 6	God Gives Jericho to Israel
10/31/10	J5	Joshua 7	God Reveals Achan's Sin
11/7/10	J6	Joshua 23-24	Holy Living in the Promised Land
11/14/10	JR1	Judges 1-3	Israel Disobeys God
11/21/10	JR2	Judges 6-8	God Uses Gideon to Deliver Israel
11/28/10	JR3	Judges 13-16	God Uses Samson to Deliver Israel
12/5/10	REVIEW	REVIEW	Review Deuteronomy-Judges
12/12/10	Chr. 1	Matthew 1:1-25	The King is Born
12/19/10	Chr. 2	Matthew 2:1-12	The King is Adored
12/26/10	Chr. 3	Matthew 2:13-23	The King is Preserved
1/2/11	JR4	Ruth 1-4	God's Sovereignty in the Book of Ruth
1/9/11	S1	1 Samuel 1-7	God Gives Israel a Prophet and a Judge
1/16/11	S2	1 Samuel 8-12	Israel Rejects God as King
1/23/11	S3	1 Samuel 13:1-14; 15:1-34	Saul Disobeys God
1/30/11	S4	1 Samuel 16	God Sees David's Heart
2/6/11	S5	1 Samuel 17	David Defends God's Honor
2/13/11	S6	1 Samuel 18:1-11; 20:1-42	God is Sovereign over Friendships
2/20/11	S7	1 Samuel 24	God Judges Between David and Saul
2/27/11	S8	2 Samuel 1:1-2:4a	God Makes David King

3/6/11	S9	2 Samuel 7	God's Gracious Promise to David
3/13/11	S10	2 Samuel 11-12	God Forgives David
3/20/11	REVIEW	REVIEW	Review Ruth and Samuel
3/27/11	K1	1 Kings 2:1-4; 3:1-15	God Gives Solomon Wisdom
4/3/11	K2	1 Kings 8:1-9:9	God's Glory Fills the Temple
4/10/11	Res1	Luke 22:7-23; 39-46	The Son of Man Anticipates His Death
4/17/11	Res2	Luke 22:47-53; 26-49	The Son of Man is Crucified
4/24/11	Res3	Luke 23:50-24:43	The Son of Man is Resurrected
5/1/11	K3	1 Kings 11	God Punishes Solomon
5/8/11	K4	1 Kings 12:1-33; 14:1-18	God Punishes Jeroboam
5/15/11	K5	1 Kings 17:1; 18:17-46	Elijah and the Prophets of Baal
5/22/11	K6	2 Kings 18-19	God is Glorified by Protecting Judah
5/29/11	K7	2 Kings 21-25	God Punishes Judah
6/5/11	REVIEW	REVIEW	Review 1 and 2 Kings
6/12/11	DJ1	Jonah 1-4	God Shows Mercy to Jonah and Nineveh
6/19/11	DJ2	Daniel 2	God Uses Daniel to Interpret the King's Dream
6/27/11	DJ3	Daniel 3	God Protects Daniel's Friends
7/3/11	DJ4	Daniel 4	God humbles Nebuchadnezzar
7/10/11	DJ5	Daniel 5	God Judges Belshazzar for His Pride
7/17/11	DJ6	Daniel 6	God Delivers Daniel from the Lions' Den
7/24/11	REVIEW	REVIEW	Review Jonah and Daniel
7/31/11	EEN1	Ezra 1-6	God Moves the Jews to Restore Worship
8/7/11	EEN2	Ezra 7-10	God Reveals His Goodness to the Jews
8/14/11	EEN3	Esther	God Uses Esther to Protect the Jews
8/21/11	EEN4	Nehemiah 1:1-4:23; 6:15-16	God Uses Nehemiah to Rebuild Jerusalem's Wall
8/28/11	EEN5	Nehemiah 8-10	God's Law Brings the Jews to Repentance
9/4/11	REVIEW	REVIEW	Review Ezra, Esther, & Nehemiah

Kids in the ADULT service?

A question that has been raised by some in our Cornerstone family is, "Why don't we have children's church?" Many adults grew up in a church that had a special program for kids during every main worship service. At Cornerstone, we emphasize a family worship service, where the whole family can attend together.

At what age should we expect our kids to sit with us in the worship service? Obviously, babies and preschoolers may need extra attention in a nursery or a classroom where their physical needs can best be met. And for them, we offer nursery and preschool ministries for kids ages 0-5. Also, every second and fourth Sunday, we provide "DiscipleTown," a ministry for first, second, and third graders during the pastor's message. In each of these ministries, we aim to teach the five principles listed below to help them be prepared to worship together in the service.

It says in Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." This verse is directed at parents for the purpose of the spiritual training of their kids. Although we would probably NOT prefer to train our kids in a worship service, it provides a great opportunity to do so. So, what can we teach our kids during the service? Here are a few ideas:

Self-Control (Galatians 5:22-23)

Self-control does not come easy to adults, so we cannot assume that it will automatically happen with kids. We have to practice self-control in our prayer lives, Bible studies, exercise, nutrition, housework, and many other situations. We must teach self-control to our kids. In today's world, kids are used to being entertained, but that does not have to dictate to us how we raise them. The worship service is not set up to make everyone laugh, nor is it a place to eat popcorn while you sit and listen. Kids can learn at a very young age that there are times to be quiet, participate in singing, listen to prayer and preaching, and sit still. At home with your kids, practice having a "quiet time," where there is little talking or movement while looking at pictures or at a book.

Orderliness (1 Corinthians 14:40)

There are ways we can teach orderliness during the worship service. First, we can point out that there are different parts to the service, and that each of those parts are important. For kids who can read, we can show them that there is an order of service on the bulletin, which we try to follow each Sunday. There are also announcements that give us information we need to know. Another area of orderliness is that once we enter the worship center, we do not leave until the end. To help accomplish this, make a stop at the restroom before entering the worship center. Remind your child that he/she will be able to use it again at the end of the service, but not during. Now of course, some kids are not medically able to wait 1 ½ hours to use the restroom. Parents must use their discretion with this, but teaching orderliness at a young age will be a valuable tool as they grow.

Study Habits (2 Timothy 3:16)

Are kids going to understand everything that goes on during the service, including the preaching? Not necessarily. However, this does not excuse us parents from teaching our kids study habits. So, what will kids study during the service? First, they will be studying US. What kind of example are we being as parents during the service? How well do we follow along in our Bibles, passionately sing the songs, willingly give our offerings, attentively listen to the sermon? Our kids are watching us and learning from us! Also, kids can practice study habits by using a Bible, whether by reading their own or a parent's. Kids can also participate in prayer by closing their eyes, and in singing by humming or listening to the songs. Play familiar church songs in your car or at home to help children become more familiar with them. During the sermon, younger kids can draw something they heard the pastor say. Encourage older kids to write down three things they heard the pastor say; then you can talk about them afterwards.

Setting of Priorities (Hebrews 10:25)

We all have priorities that we set, according to what we think is important. Kids are no different. The worship service is a time to teach our kids that our priorities should be with God. When kids say, "I don't want to go to church," we know that their priorities are not where they should be. However, when we set the expectation that staying home is NOT an option, our kids will learn that there is a different standard of priorities than their own. We need to be teaching our kids why we worship together (Hebrews 10:25) and what worship is. Also, when we open the Bible during the service and at home, we are showing that putting ourselves under its authority is a priority to us. Are we modeling the fact that God is OUR first priority, so the kids learn from our examples?

Service (Romans 12:1)

Kids are used to the idea that things are done for them. The worship service is a time to teach kids that we are all expected to serve the Lord. There are many examples of people serving during the worship service, including the ushers, choir, worship team, instrumentalists, sound/video technicians, pastors, nursery leaders, and those who serve behind-the-scenes. Teach your kids why these people are serving and what it takes to serve in these areas. Some examples of giving your child an opportunity to serve is after the service, have them pick up papers left behind or collect communion cups.

These are just five ways you can teach your kids during the worship service. Remember that this is a process that takes a lot of time and effort on the parents' part. One more practical way parents can help a younger child stay focused on these areas of teaching is to provide him/her with a "worship bag." This could be a canvas bag that is used for the worship service only. It should be considered and presented as a special bag that is not used for anything else. The bag should contain items that help your child stay involved and focused during the service. Here are some examples of items to include in the bag:

- Pencils
- Crayons
- Peppermint
- Bible coloring book
- Small spiral notebook
- Picture Bible storybook
- Bookmarks
- Change for the offering
- Any other items which you might find helpful

Establish your rules for how and when the items in the bag are to be used. For example, during prayer time, your child should be praying. During song time, he/she should be singing/listening. If everyone is standing, your child should stand, too. Give specific assignments like: draw/color a picture of the pastor or usher doing his "job." Have a specific time when the peppermint can be eaten (i.e. after the offering). Be creative and use your imagination with this bag. So now, instead of just saying, "Shh, sit still!" let's take the opportunity during the worship service to teach our kids biblical principles that will last a lifetime.

In Philippians 4:6, Paul reminds the church that, "in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." The process of training our kids requires much prayer. We cannot do it alone. Together with your kids, ask the Lord to help your family reflect His character by walking in His light.

The Family: Together in God's Presence

By John and Noel Piper January 1, 1995

God-centered worship is supremely important in the life of our church. We approach the Sunday morning worship hour with great seriousness and earnestness and expectancy. We try to banish all that is flippant or trivial or chatty.

Not all services are this way. Sunday morning is the Mount of Transfiguration—the awesome place of glory and speechlessness. Sunday or Wednesday evening is the Mount of Olives—the familiar spot for conversation with the Lord and each other.

In this article, we hope to do two things: 1) demonstrate that parents (or some responsible adult) should bring little children to the Sunday morning worship service rather than send them to a "children's church"; 2) give some practical advice about how to do it.

We don't claim that our way of worshipping is the only valid way. Not all our ideas may fit with the way another church does it.

For example, we don't have a children's sermon as part of our Sunday morning service. It would be fun for the children, but in the long run would weaken the spiritual intensity of our worship. To everything there is a season. And we believe that, for at least one hour a week, we should sustain a maximum intensity of moving reverence.

The Biggest Stumbling Block

There are several reasons why we urge parents to bring their children to worship. But these arguments will not carry much weight with parents who do not love to worship God.

The greatest stumbling block for children in worship is that their parents do not cherish the hour. Children can feel the difference between duty and delight. Therefore, the first and most important job of a parent is to fall in love with the worship of God. You can't impart what you don't possess.

Togetherness

Worshipping together counters the contemporary fragmentation of families. Hectic American life leaves little time for significant togetherness. It is hard to overestimate the good influence of families doing valuable things together week in and week out, year in and year out. Worship is the most valuable thing a human can do. The cumulative effect of 650 worship services spent with Mom and Dad between the ages of 4 and 17 is incalculable.

Catch the Spirit

Parents have the responsibility to teach their children by their own example the meaning and value of worship. Therefore, parents should want their children with them in worship so the children can catch the spirit and form of their parents' worship.

Children should see how Mom and Dad bow their heads in earnest prayer during the prelude and other non-directed times. They should see how Mom and Dad sing praise to God with joy in their faces, and how they listen hungrily to His Word. They should catch the spirit of their parents meeting the living God.

Something seems wrong when parents want to take their children in the formative years and put them with other children and other adults to form their attitude and behavior in worship. Parents should be jealous to model for their children the tremendous value they put on reverence in the presence of Almighty God.

Not an Excessive Expectation

To sit still and be quiet for an hour or two on Sunday is not an excessive expectation for a healthy 6-year-old who has been taught to obey his parents. It requires a measure of discipline, but that is precisely what we want to encourage parents to impart to their children in the first five years.

Thus the desire to have children in the worship service is part of a broader concern that children be reared so that they are "submissive and respectful in every way" (1 Timothy 3:4).

Children can be taught in the first five years of life to obey their father and mother when they say, "Sit still and be quiet." Parents' helplessness to control their children should not be solved by alternative services but by a renewal of discipline in the home.

Not Everything Goes Over Their Heads

Children absorb a tremendous amount that is of value. And this is true even if they say they are bored.

Music and words become familiar. The message of the music starts to sink in. The form of the service comes to feel natural. The choir makes a special impression with a kind of music the children may hear at no other time. Even if most of the sermon goes over their heads, experience shows that children hear and remember remarkable things.

The content of the prayers and songs and sermon gives parents unparalleled opportunities to teach their children the great truths of our faith. If parents would only learn to query their children after the service and then explain things, the children's capacity to participate would soar.

Not everything children experience has to be put on their level in order to do them good. Some things must be. But not everything.

For example, to learn a new language you can go step by step from alphabet to vocabulary to grammar to syntax. Or you can take a course where you dive in over your head, and all you hear is the language you don't know. Most language teachers would agree that the latter is by far the most effective.

Sunday worship service is not useless to children just because much of it goes over their heads. They can and will grow into this new language faster than we think—if positive and happy attitudes are fostered by the parents.

A Sense of Awe

There is a sense of solemnity and awe which children should experience in the presence of God. This is not likely to happen in children's church. Is there such a thing as children's thunder or children's lightning or the crashing of the sea "for children"?

A deep sense of the unknown and the mysterious can rise in the soul of a sensitive child in solemn worship—if his parents are going hard after God themselves. A deep moving of the magnificence of God can come to the young, tender heart through certain moments of great hymns or "loud silence" or authoritative preaching. These are of immeasurable value in the cultivation of a heart that fears and loves God.

We do not believe that children who have been in children's church for several years between the ages of 6 and 12 will be more inclined or better trained to enjoy worship than if they had spent those years at the side of their parents. In fact, the opposite is probably the case.

It will probably be harder to acclimate a 10- or 12-year-old to a new worship service than a 5- or 6-year-old. The cement is much less wet, and vast possibilities of shaping the impulses of the heart are gone.

Some Practical Suggestions from Noel

When our four sons grew to be young men, we assumed that the worship-training chapter of our life had ended. But God has wonderful surprises. Our youngest son was 12 when we adopted our daughter, who was just a couple of months old. So our experience with young children in the pew started more than twenty years ago and will continue a while longer.

Getting Started Step by Step

We discovered that the very earliest "school" for worship is in the home—when we help a baby be quiet for just a moment while we ask God's blessing on our meal; when a toddler is sitting still to listen to a Bible story book; when a child is learning to pay attention to God's Word and to pray during family devotional times.

At church, even while our children were still nursery-aged, I began to help them take steps toward eventual regular attendance in Sunday morning worship service. I used other gatherings as a training ground—baptisms, choir concerts, missionary videos or other special events that would grab the attention of a 3-year-old. I'd "promote" these to the child as something exciting and grown-up. The occasional special attendance gradually developed

into regular evening attendance, while at the same time we were beginning to attempt Sunday mornings more and more regularly.

I've chosen not to use the church's child care as an escape route when the service becomes long or the child gets restless. I don't want to communicate that you go to a service as long as it seems interesting, and then you can go play. And I wanted to avoid a pattern that might reinforce the idea that all of the service is good, up until the preaching of God's Word—then you can leave.

Of course, there are times when a child gets restless or noisy, despite a parent's best efforts. I pray for the understanding of the people around me, and try to deal with the problem unobtrusively. But if the child won't be quiet or still, I take him or her out—for the sake of quick discipline and for the sake of the other worshipers. Then I have to decide whether we'll slip back into service or stay in the area reserved for parents with young children. It depends on how responsive the child seems and whether there's an appropriate moment in the flow of the service. If we stay in the "family area" outside the sanctuary, I help my child sit quietly as if we were still in the sanctuary.

By the time they are four years old, our children assume that they'll be at all the regular weekly services with us.

Preparation All Week Long

Your anticipation and conversation before and after service and during the week will be important in helping your child learn to love worship and to behave well in service.

Help your children become acquainted with your pastor. Let them shake hands with him at the door and be greeted by him. Talk about who the worship leaders are; call them by name. Suggest that your child's Sunday School teacher invite the pastor to spend a few minutes with the children if your church's Sunday morning schedule allows for that.

If you know what the Scripture passage will be for the coming Sunday, read it together several times during the week. A little one's face really lights up when he hears familiar words from the pulpit.

Talk about what is "special" this week: a trumpet solo, a friend singing, a missionary speaker from a country you have been praying for.

Sometimes you can take the regular elements of the service and make them part of the anticipation. "We've been reading about Joseph. What do you think the pastor will say about him?" "What might the choir be singing this morning?" "Maybe we can sit next to our handicapped friend and help him with his hymnbook so he can worship better too."

There are two additional and important pre-service preparations for us: a pen and notepad for "Sunday notes" and a trip to the rest room (leaving the service is highly discouraged).

What Happens During Service?

First, I let a child who wants a worship folder have one—it helps a child feel like a participant in the service. And quietly, before service begins, I may point to the different parts of the service listed in the folder.

During service, we all sit or stand along with rest of the congregation. I share my Bible or hymnal or worship folder with my little one, because use of these is an important part of the service.

The beginning of the sermon is the signal for "notetaking" to begin. (I want a child's activities to be related to the service. So we don't bring library books to read. I do let a very young child look at pictures in his Bible, if he can do it quietly.) Notetaking doesn't mean just scribbling, but "taking notes" on a special pad used just for service.

"Taking notes" grows up as the child does. At first he draws pictures of what he hears in the sermon. Individual words or names trigger individual pictures. You might pick out a word that will be used frequently in the sermon; have the child listen carefully and make a check mark in his "notes" each time he hears the word.

Later he may want to copy letters or words from the Scripture passage for the morning. When spelling comes easier, he will write words and then phrases he hears in the sermon. Before you might expect it, he will probably be outlining the sermon and noting whole concepts.

Goals and Requirements

My training for worship has three main goals:

1. That children learn early and as well as they can to worship God heartily.
2. That parents be able to worship.
3. That families cause no distraction to the people around them.

So there are certain expectations that I teach the young ones and expect of the older ones:

Sit or stand or close eyes when the service calls for it.

Sit up straight and still—not lounging or fidgeting or crawling around, but respectful toward God and the worshipers around you.

Keep bulletin papers and Bible and hymnal pages as quiet as possible.

Stay awake. Taking notes helps. (I did allow the smallest ones to sleep, but they usually didn't need to!)

Look toward the worship leaders in the front. No people-gazing or clock-watching.

If you can read fast enough, sing along with the printed words. At least keep your eyes on the words and try to think them. If you can't read yet, listen very hard.

Creating an Environment in the Pew

For my part, I try to create an environment in our pew that makes worship easier. In past years, I would sit between whichever two were having the most trouble with each other that day. We choose seats where we can see the front better (while seated, not kneeling on the pew; kneeling leads to squirming and blocks the view of others).

Each child has a Bible, offering money and worship folder at hand, so he doesn't have to scramble and dig during the worship time. During the prelude, if I notice in the bulletin something unusual for which we need to be prepared (a responsive reading or congregational prayers, for example), I quietly point it out to a child who is old enough to participate.

Afterward

When the service has ended, my first words are praise to the child who has behaved well. In addition to the praise, I might also mention one or two things that we both hope will be better next time.

But what if there has been disregard of our established expectations and little attempt to behave? The first thing that happens following the service is a silent and immediate trip to the most private place we can find. Then the deserved words are spoken and consequences administered or promised.

Closeness and Warmth

On the rare occasions when my pastor-husband can sit with the rest of us, the youngest one climbs right into his lap—and is more attentive and still than usual. What a wonderful thing for a young mind to closely associate the closeness and warmth of a parent's lap with special God-times.

A child gets almost the same feeling from being next to his parent or from an arm around the shoulder or an affectionate hand on the knee.

The setting of the tight family circle focusing toward God will be a nonverbal picture growing richer and richer in the child's mind and heart as he matures in appreciation for his family and in awe at the greatness of God.