



Session 8

Learning to Worship

As a parent of young children, worship on a Sunday morning often consisted of running around after a toddler and trying to keep the other children entertained. On some occasions it did not feel particularly restful or particularly worshipful!

I don't think this is how worship has to be for parents of young children. Over the past few years God has been showing us more of His heart towards our younger members. He has shown us how we can encourage them and help them engage in worship. Jesus told His disciples to let the little children come to Him; He wants to interact with our children as much as He does with us. He is pleased when they worship Him, the Bible says it is like a sweet smelling fragrance to Him. At LifeLine, we have always said that children are an important part of the church body; they are not the church of tomorrow, they are the church of today. Not only are they a significant part of the body, they are also a powerful part. The Bible talks about children being like arrows (Psalm 127:4). Psalm 8:2 (NIV UK) says that the praise of children can bring down the strongholds of the enemy. Isn't that incredible! People who would be seen as the weakest in worldly eyes have such power in God's Kingdom.

It's clear that God's heart is that young children worship Him. As parents, we want to show our children how they can please God and make the right choices in daily life. When we meet together on a Sunday, we need to be doing the same. When children engage in worship it please Him, just as it pleases Him when we adults worship. We need to be encouraging and equipping our children to worship. This may not be easy or convenient, but it is important.

If your child has been coming to church since they were born they will be very familiar with worship, but this does not mean that they will know what it is. So it's important to explain to our children what is going on during worship – when we come together on a Sunday we are not just singing songs together.

However, even before our children 'understand' what worship is, they can be a part of it. Young children watch their parents engaged in worship and they are quick to copy. If dad is raising his hands, they may do this too. If mum is dancing, they may well join in. Again, we have an opportunity to model what this aspect of our relationship with Jesus looks like. As our children get older we can talk to them about why we do what we do – why we raise our hands or what speaking in tongues is. When you are shouting out praises, you could choose simple words that your child can copy, like "God you are amazing," "God you are so big", or "God you are good."

As a child understands more, we can talk to them about choosing to worship even when we don't feel like it. We don't worship for ourselves, because it makes us feel good; we worship because it pleases God. When we come to the meeting on Sunday we have an opportunity to choose whether we are going to seek to please God or ourselves.

Children might not feel they know how to worship – it can be helpful to talk to them about worshipping with all their heart, mind, body and soul.

When we worship with our mind we are choosing to think about God, we are choosing to redirect our thoughts away from other things like toys or food, and onto Him. We can help our mind to worship by speaking out - if we are telling God how amazing He is with our voice, this is what our mind is focused on. Also, when we are singing a song we can choose to focus our mind on the words of the song.

Worshipping with our bodies is something that all ages can do. One of the first actions children learn is to clap. We clap at them to show appreciation and they quickly learn to copy. They can do this in worship and as they see us using our bodies in different ways they will learn new actions: standing, stamping their feet, cheering, shouting, jumping, skipping and dancing. As children get older they might become more reluctant to do things like dancing. But they

can choose to use their bodies to worship in different ways. Simply standing instead of sitting demonstrates a choice to engage. Children may want to raise their hands as an act of worship, but they may need encouragement. One of my children likes me to raise his hands for him (I think he's a little self-conscious), but often I can let go after a while and he will keep them up.

There are many different expressions of worship and it might look completely different for different children. As parents we can encourage our children to worship without dictating how they do it. The important thing is that they are focusing on who God is. For example, one of my children likes to admire God by exploring nature. We can help to guide children to worship by making suggestions, directing their attention to what God is doing or to the words of the song and by removing any distractions. It may mean we can't fully focus on worship for ourselves all the time, but I am sure it pleases God's heart when we lead our children to worship Him.

We have mainly focused on Sunday morning worship so far, but it is important that we also provide opportunities for worship at home, whatever that may look like. Thankfulness is a part of worship and many families have thankful boxes where they write down what they are thankful for and then read them out together. It can be helpful to listen to songs we use in worship at home, and talk about what the words mean. YouTube is a great resource to get your children singing and using actions to worship at home. If your child likes to write, draw, paint or make PowerPoint presentations, encourage them to use these different mediums to express who God is and what He has done.

Here are some thoughts from one mum on what she has done at home to help her young children engage in worship:

"Through attending a Christian playgroup and being involved with our Sunday morning group for two and three-year-olds, I heard children's worship songs. They express love to God in simple terms, and they really stay in your head. I use one of them as a tool to build my children's understanding that God is with us, everywhere. The lyrics are:

*"If I go climbing, God is there. If I go climbing on the highest mountain,
God is there 'cos He is everywhere."*

*"As a family, we change the '**doing word**' to something relevant to us - we walk a lot, so sing, "**If I go a walking...**" We sing different lines to do with school, such as, "**If I do reading... If I do writing...**" This has helped build a foundation for my children that God is everywhere.*

Spotify has been the best resource for my family; I no longer put the radio on but have the LifeLine playlist playing as we get ready for bed and while I am cooking dinner. On Saturday morning we use YouTube to access other songs with actions.

What I like is that these things don't take hours of time, you can just weave them into your life."

Click here for the Link to the LifeLine Spotify Worship Playlist.

<https://open.spotify.com/user/lifelinechurch/playlist/5IpLrBRUQlHDJJZOp9mg6X>

(You'll need to sign up for a free Spotify account for this, but it's very easy.)

Principles

1) Children are a significant part of the body and they are powerful spiritually.

Psalm 8: 2

"You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you." (New Living Translation)

2) Parents are responsible for leading their children and teaching them about God.

Deuteronomy 6: 6-9

"And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

(New Living Translation)

Questions:

- How do you worship and what do you enjoy about worship? How can you share this with your child?
- What is worship for your family? What does it look like?
- What creative way can you help your children engage in worship?

Practicals:

- Find a way to share what you are thankful for as a family.
- Play worship songs at home and talk to your children about what they mean.
- In worship on Sunday, take time to talk to your child about what is going on and encourage them to join in.

Further reading

3 helpful verses (English Standard Version)

Mark 10:13-16

“And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.”

Psalms 95:1-6

“Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!”

Psalm 150:1-6

“Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!
Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent
greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!
Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise
him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let
everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!”