

PARENTING IN THE PEW: Week 1

Course Overview / The Holy Hug (Chapter 10)

- When looking for a home church, what are some common evaluative criteria?
- What are common reasons for church attendance?
- Are these criteria and reasons enough for a lifetime of faith? Why or why not?
- What do we teach our children by engaging church in this fashion?
- What has come of Christian traditions and biblical truth in our society?
- What is the source of true stability? (Heb 13:8 / Heb. 4:9-16)

People are increasingly wary of being manipulated by those who popularly franchise religious experience. Worship is where we find truth and rest. Worship is a gem of truth in a marketplace of cheap imitations. When you introduce your children to what is completely genuine, you are equipping them to judge all the other experiences and possibilities that will come to them.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

To equip parents in teaching their young children how to genuinely encounter the source of all Truth – God the Father and Jesus Christ His son, who bids the little children to come to Him and worship as His Word commands. Biblical worship is for God’s glory and our benefit that we may find rest for our weary souls in this life and eternal hope in the life to come.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Sunday Morning begins Saturday Night

Week 3: Jesus Welcomes the Worship of Children

Week 4: Reducing Distractions and Paying Attention

Week 5: Sacraments (Baptism & the Lord’s Supper)

Week 6: Prayer & Confession

Week 7: Make a Joyful Noise

Week 8: Just How Long Was That Sermon?

- What are your expectations of this course?
- How can this be most helpful to you, mom and dad? What do you need/want most from this course?
- “Parenting in the pew may be the hardest part of parenting.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
- Can parenting in the pew benefit moms and dads personally? If so, how?

Memorable Quote

“God must be real in our experience of faith. He must be known and encountered. We cannot be satisfied with worship that simply fulfills social and religious obligations. God must be heard. We need to teach our children what it means to touch the hem of his garment and be healed. Our children need to clamber into the loving lap of the Savior. He yearns for the companionship of children and longs to bless them.”

- Mark 10:14. Parenting in the pew is our response to Jesus’ admonition not to hinder our children. Teaching our children to worship helps them develop a lifelong habit and desire to bless the Lord with their embrace of their souls.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

1. Lesson Review: In what ways do you (mom and dad) hinder your children in their spiritual growth and understanding of Christ?
2. The Week Ahead: What is your attitude toward your children when you leave the house Sunday morning? How about during service?

WORSHIP TRAINING CLASS (CHILDREN)

Last Week (Sept. 13): Preparing for worship and bulletin outline.

This Week (Sept. 20): Prayer and Tithing.

*“Worship is a time when I bring the scribbles of my life and my Father takes them and puts them all on his heavenly refrigerator – all the scribbles, not just the pretty ones or the ones that make sense. He is the perfect parent who always sees what’s really there.
This is the Father of truth and grace (that our children) can know and love.”*

PARENTING IN THE PEW: Week 2

Sunday Morning Begins Saturday Night / Chapter 4

- **Kids Class Review:** Prayer & Tithing
- **Weekly Challenge Question Review:**
 - In what ways do you (mom and dad) hinder your children in their spiritual growth and understanding of Christ?
 - What is your attitude toward your children when you leave the house Sunday morning? How about during service?
- Describe a typical Sunday morning at your house.

WORSHIP PREPARATION FRAMEWORK

- **Working to Worship**
Worship is hard and rewarding work. Worship neither comes easily or naturally. We cannot do it on leftover energy of a long week and late Saturday night.
- **Heart Preparation**
Worship begins with an attitude check. We must remind ourselves why the work is worth doing. Our children should sense the importance and excitement of Sunday worship, just as they look forward to birthdays.
- **Home Preparation**
The call to worship begins with the chime of an alarm clock that is set with Sabbath rest in mind. In other words, get up early so you're not rushed, unprepared, short-tempered and late. We must remember we have an enemy who delights in hypocrisy and distraction. Spiritual warfare on Sunday morning is a reality as we strive to "remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy."
- **Dressing for Worship**
Put out your Sunday clothes on Saturday night and dress comfortably. Too many Sundays are overshadowed by what we wear and how we look.
- **Thinking Ahead / Tithe or Tip?**
 - What do we need on Sunday a.m.? (Tithe, reciting memory verse, practicing special music, Sunday school supplies, snacks and meals, Loaves and Fishes, etc.)
 - Teaching children to tithe is an exciting way to teach them to trust God and participate in the work of His people.
- **Coming to Worship**
Children need to sense our excitement about worshipping with God's people. A heart of gratitude and eyes of faith are easier to have when Sunday is more holy and less hassle.
- **Called to Worship**
Worship is not a friendly suggestion, but a loving command. God is watchful of our worship. He knows our hearts and minds.

Memorable Quote

"Worship is loving the Lord with an attitude. We love the Lord every day but Sunday is God's favorite day and the frosting is sweeter."

WEEKLY CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

3. Lesson Review: What are 3 ways I can decrease my family's Sunday morning Hypocrisy Quotient?
4. The Week Ahead: Are you more concerned with what the Lord thinks of your children, or what others are thinking of you?

WORSHIP TRAINING CLASS (CHILDREN)

Last Week (Sept. 20): Prayer and Tithing.

This Week (Sept. 27): Practice in the Pew (no class).

PARENTING IN THE PEW: Week 3

Praise and Puppies / Chapter 3

- **Kids Class Review:** Prayer & Tithing
- **Weekly Challenge Question Review:**
 - What are 3 ways I can decrease my family's Sunday morning Hypocrisy Quotient?
 - Are you more concerned with what the Lord thinks of your children, or what others are thinking of you?
- Share examples of how you confused Christian themes as a young child.
- What past attitudes do you bring to your present outlook on worship and the value of it?
- Matthew 18:1-5.

GUIDELINES FOR INVOLVING CHILDREN IN WORSHIP

- **The ideas of faith we share need careful telling**
Stories, allegory, analogy, word-pictures – all are helpful for grasping a faith not attainable with the 5 senses.
- **Unpack spiritual and faith themes according to your child's ability to understand abstract concepts**
1) Preschoolers readily believe; 2) Gradeschoolers want more facts; 3) Late gradeschoolers ask lots of questions; 4) Teens seek self-application.
- **Engage your child in every syllable of the worship service**
Children are often the leaders in boldly approaching the throne of grace. An encounter with God may not look like one at first. God can surprise us with his presence in our children's lives.
- **Parents are the best people to teach their children about worship**
This process keeps parents engaged, forcing us to pay attention. Remember, our minds are prone to wander equally as much. Children remind those of us more familiar with the truths of Scripture how we should respond.

Memorable Quote

"[Children] respond to the truth of God with awestruck insight – with worship."

WEEKLY CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

5. Lesson Review: Pick 2 spiritual themes to work on with your children this week. How can you illustrate or explain them?
6. The Week Ahead: What is the most frequent distraction you experience during worship and why is it distracting to you?

WORSHIP TRAINING CLASS (CHILDREN)

Last Week (Sept. 20): Practice in the Pew (no class).

This Week (Oct. 4): The Sermon.

PARENTING IN THE PEW: Week 4

Review

- **Mark 10:14 (From Week 1)**

Parenting in the pew is our response to Jesus' admonition not to hinder our children. Teaching our children to worship helps them develop a lifelong habit and desire to bless the Lord with them embrace of their souls.

- **Heart Preparation (From Week 2)**

Worship begins with an attitude check. We must remind ourselves why the work is worth doing. Our children should sense the importance and excitement of Sunday worship, just as they look forward to birthdays.

- **Matthew 18:1-5 (From Week 3)**

What does it mean to "humble" ourselves like children? How does humility make us "greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Discuss examples how you (as an adult) have had childlike faith at various times in your relationship with Christ.

- **James 1:19-27**

How does this passage relate to worship and the "religion" that we (as parents) should desire our children to embrace?

- **Challenge Questions (All questions asked thus far)**

1. In what ways do you (mom and dad) hinder your children in their spiritual growth and understanding of Christ?
2. What is your attitude toward your children when you leave the house Sunday morning? How about during service?
3. What are 3 ways I can decrease my family's Sunday morning Hypocrisy Quotient?
4. Are you more concerned with what the Lord thinks of your children, or what others are thinking of you?
5. Pick 2 spiritual themes to work on with your children this week. How can you illustrate or explain them?
6. What is the most frequent distraction you experience during worship and why is it distracting to you?

PARENTING IN THE PEW: Week 5

Counting Bricks or Encountering God / Chapter 5

- **Kids Class Review:** How did you engage your children this week on Andrew’s sermon last Sunday?
- **Weekly Challenge Question Review:**
 - What sorts of things distracted you as a kid in church? What distracts you now (as an adult)?
 - What do your children do when they are distracted? What is your reaction (internally and externally)?
- Proverbs 22: 6, 15-19
- Recall a pivotal moment in your spiritual journey that you experienced during church
- Do you attempt to “entertain” during church

Memorable Quote

Worship as entertainment will not accelerate the spiritual growth of our children. Worship needs to be the one realm in our culture that refuses to accept the world’s addiction to be entertained in order to learn.

RESPONDING TO AND REDUCING DISTRACTIONS DURING WORSHIP

- **Be with your children**
Paying attention in worship is foundational to training children in the pew. Parents and children should sit together during worship.
- **Being attentive**
If we want our children to pay attention to the Lord, we must eliminate as many distractions as possible. We must not only train children to be attentive, but must take practical steps in helping them to do so:
 - Limit potty breaks
 - Children enter the sanctuary “empty handed”
 - Avoid candy/gum to “keep them quiet”
- **Being Quiet**
Quietness is a means to the effort of helping kids learn to worship – not an end. The goal is to engage the Lord in worship, not to learn to be quiet. It can seem paradoxical that parents have to talk more (in hushed tones) to properly train their children.
- **Being Helpful**
If children are trained to participate at a young age, their sense of belonging and paying attention is more natural.
 - Ask even the youngest children to “help” read responsively
 - Engage children with thought-provoking questions
- **Being Firm**
Whatever communicates to your child that you are serious about behavior in certain situations, whether in a supermarket or sanctuary, should be applied in private and with consistency. Being clear about expectations and consequences is very important, no matter how children are disciplined.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

7. Lesson Review: Pick one of the 5 points above and develop an action plan for implementation – and share it with your children.
8. The Week Ahead: Can you adequately (in a simple way) explain the sacraments – their purpose and scope – to your children?

WORSHIP TRAINING CLASS (CHILDREN)

Last Week (Oct. 11): The Sermon

This Week (Oct. 25): The Sacraments

PARENTING IN THE PEW: Week 6

Saving Up for Something Special / Chapter 9

- **Kids Class Review:** What responses did you receive from your children after reviewing their lesson on Baptism and Communion?
- **Weekly Challenge Question Review:**
 - Share your action plan for reducing distractions during worship
 - Can you simply (and adequately) explain the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to your children?
- Share some of your own experiences and memories with communion and baptism

Memorable Quote

Parental guidance is needed for car-buying, TV and movie watching and friend-selecting. Parenting in the pew, training children to worship, is a marathon PG experience too. And it is never more important than when it concerns the sacraments of the church.

Sacraments are ...

Symbols: water, bread, juice or wine. But they are not just symbols. They have been made sacred and special for use in the church to help us remember and rehearse the salvation of God. They are visible signs of an invisible grace.

- Baptism (pg. 109)
- The Lord's Supper (pg. 111)

3 WAYS TO ENGAGE CHILDREN IN THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

- Use the occasion of others' baptism to teach children the significance of their own baptism. Baptism is a profound reminder to a child about who they are in the family of God. (Remind them of "the day this happened to you.") The story of the day they were baptized can be told and retold.
- Talking about the meaning of baptism can help children gain a picture of God's love and provision of care and acceptance for His children.
- Teens (if not baptized) – help them think through the motivation behind their desire to be baptized. Help them think through what it means to be baptized and to internalize its significance from the perspective of cleansing and acceptance

4 STEPS TO PREPARING FOR PARTICIPATION in the LORD'S SUPPER

- **Anticipation**
Anticipation is the best preparation for appreciation. Young children may be able to recite John 3:16 and believe it with all their hearts, but this doesn't mean they are necessarily ready for the responsibility of self-examination that comes with this sacramental expression of faith. We need to help our children anticipate the joys of participating in the Lord's Supper.
- **Preparation**
Use the period of anticipation to help your child prepare. Think it through with your family; study the significance of Communion; seek counsel from pastors and elders. If you child feels left out, neglected or deprived because they can't participate in the sacrament, it may be because explanations have been given in terms of denial, not anticipation.
- **Practice and Setting an Example**
Your children can share the experience of the Lord's Supper vivaciously simply by being with you. Allow them to walk through the line with you; Cup their hands around yours; Pray with them; As you take each element, remind them of its meaning and significance.

Allow your children to be aware of times when you are NOT able to take Communion on account of things not being right in your heart toward and with God. Remind them of Paul's admonition about unworthy participation in the sacrament. Use this as an opportunity to remind them about prayer, repentance, confession and reconciliation.

PARENTING IN THE PEW: Week 7

Just How Long Was That Sermon? / Chapter 8

- Is there any single sermon illustration or story that you heard as a kid that you remember today?
- What methods do you currently employ (if any) to draw your children into the Sunday sermon?
- Acts 20:7-12
- Personality differences of children – gradeschoolers to teens (pg. 98)

6 WAYS TO CONNECT KIDS TO SUNDAY SERMONS

- Prompt kids to “listen to the story”. This is a way of directing attention to parts of the sermon that can be most easily understood by youngsters (Often found at the very beginning of the sermon or preceding each major point of the outline.
- Avoid tendency to over simplify Scripture. Simplify the point, but not God’s Word. The danger is in trivializing the depth of Scripture and ultimately failing to meet the spiritual needs of youngsters and giving them a sense that there is more to be gleaned than simply the words themselves.
- Realistically understand your child’s attention span. Dozing off isn’t necessarily a punishable offense. With young children, the goal should be engaging them in one or two memorable and understandable pieces of the sermon.
- Review highlights of the sermon when you get home. This is critical to helping your children understand the sermon is important and that you put great value on the spiritual instruction, authority and oversight of your church pastor.
- Welcome rather than discourage the interaction of your children during the service.
 - Answer questions when asked, if you can do it quickly and simply. Otherwise, tell them you will explain it after the service – and remember to do so!
 - If the pastor answers your child’s question (later in the sermon), poke your kids and encourage them to listen for the answer. This helps children get the idea that to keep listening is helpful.
- Bribes are a good thing – particularly for adolescents and teens. Case study of the Atomic Praise Band (pg 103).

Memorable Quote

... young people like to be challenge. Parents need to expect more from their children in church.

1. **How can SRPC and its leadership better serve and assist you in helping to train your children to worship in a manner worthy of the Gospel and glorifying to God?**
2. **What practical methods can SRPC use during the Sunday worship hour to assist in better engaging your children in listening to and participating in the sermon?**
3. **How can we improve the Parenting in the Pew course?**

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