

FAMILIES WORSHIPING TOGETHER

YES, It is possible . . . even Biblical

An article by Marc Jantomaso

I have come to believe that families are to worship together and this is God's divine plan and the Biblical norm. A careful observation of Scripture will reveal that whenever Believers gathered together to worship, all ages were included. Never was there a separation of ages during times of worship or teaching. Once Jesus' disciples tried to separate the little children from Jesus: "*But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of God.'*" –Mark 10:14

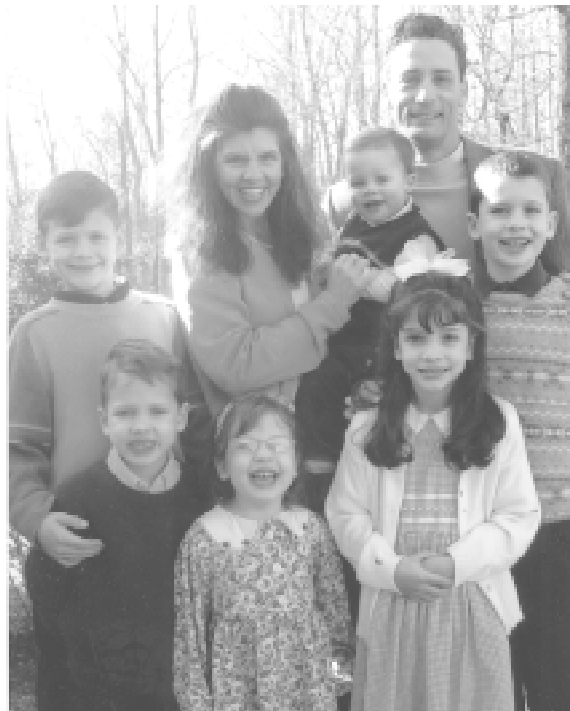
I realize that young children may sometimes be a distraction to older people worshiping at church. Is the Biblical response to forbid them from the worship service? Not according to Jesus.

"...You shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. **Gather the people together, men and women and little ones...**that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law." – Deuteronomy 31:11-12

Ever since God blessed my wife and me with children we have had a deep desire to worship with our children in church. This desire was born out of a strong conviction from God that the best way to pass on our faith is to worship with our children, especially at a young age when impressions have the greatest impact.

After the birth of our 5th child, with the oldest child age 6 at the time, we began to attempt to worship together as a family in church. At times we became discouraged trying to keep all our young children from becoming a distraction to those worshiping around us. We thought maybe this idea of the whole family worshipping together peacefully, in Sunday morning worship, was not humanly possible with young children.

Then one Sunday we went to a new church and divinely sat down behind another family with the same number of children, almost the same ages. Their children did not drop crayons on the floor, make distracting noises, constantly move around, turn around, or fall down. The parents did not appear frustrated or at wits end. The children looked normal...even joyful! At the end of the service I knew whom I immediately wanted to speak with. I approached the father and asked: "How did you do that?" "Do what?" was his response. I proceeded to ask him how he got his children to sit still and attentive. His answer to my question was simple: Teach, train, and practice. This father and mother would sit their children down at home and "practice" church. They would read the Bible, pray, and sing hymns. We soon began to implement this "practice" worship time in our own home. The greatest challenge was, and still is at times, being consistent in our family worship time. Yet, the peaceful results have been worth the effort.



BUT MY CHILD IS DIFFERENT

Some parents may say, "But my child is different. He /she is very active, high energy, and filled with wiggle worms." All the more reason for diligent and disciplined training sessions. "**Train up a child in the way he should go...**" (Proverbs 22:6)

When children are young, parents have a **once in a life-time opportunity** to mold and shape the mind and heart of their child. This season of life is short. The window is only open

for a short while. God tells us to diligently teach our children His commands...to impress them on our children. (Deuteronomy 6:1-9) Family worship is a great opportunity to teach children God's Word and train them to be attentive to His Word. Don't let busyness, tiredness, stress, unhappiness, or apathy keep you from making great impressions that will last a lifetime and longer.

HELPING OUR CHILDREN ESCAPE A LIFE OF GRIEF AND PAIN

Why training our children to sit still, pay attention, and participate in worship is critical to helping our children escape a life of grief and pain.

Self-control . . . mastery of body is essential to not giving in to temptation and reaping the painful results of



a life sown with the seeds of sin. When we train our children to sit still . . . to control themselves, we are training them to control their minds and bodies. A mind and body out of control is a life destined for destruction. Why do some people continue to destroy their minds and bodies through addiction to drugs (alcohol, nicotine, pills . . .)? They lack the self-control of mind and body to quit or to not even begin. Why do some people bury themselves in financial debt? They lack self-control in spending money. Why do some husbands and wives get angry and speak destructive words they later regret? They lack self-control over their mouths and emotions. Why do some people succumb to adulterous relationships? They lack self-control over their eyes, minds, bodies, and emotions. Why are so many men destroying their marriages through pornography? They lack self-control with their thoughts.

THERE'S A WAR GOING ON

There's a war going on and this one is not in the Middle East. It's right in the middle of our minds. *"I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."* (Romans 7:22-23

"...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin... Sin shall not have dominion over you..." Romans 6:6,14

"Do not be drunk with wine, instead be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18) Do not be under the influence, the control of wine; instead be under the influence, the control of God's Holy Spirit. And being controlled by the Spirit will give us the power to exercise control over ourselves.

Self-control is critical for a life that will be constructive, rather than destructive. Young children being trained to exhibit self-control in church worship, will develop a character quality that will reap a harvest of righteousness and peace for a lifetime. *"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."* Hebrews 12:11

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME

Home is the training ground. Church is the proving ground. When having family worship at home, it is important that your expectations and requirements for attentiveness are the same that you expect at church. I can remember playing baseball in high school and my coach saying: "The way you practice will determine the way you play. You train in practice the same way you desire to play in the game."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING

- Family worship: One suggestion is to utilize the worship bulletin. Read and discuss Scripture passage that was taught. Sing worship songs printed in bulletin (look up Scripture references that go with the song) Discuss worship service on way home from church or at lunch. (what you learned, how God spoke to you, what you will begin to do differently) Read and discuss the Psalm that was read at church. Read entire passage from which the current memory verse is taken. Pray for those listed in bulletin and for upcoming events listed.
- Family worship need not be complicated. I love what a pastor in Wake Forest, Scott Brown, says about leading family worship. His **simple family worship plan**: Flop open your Bible. Read it. Ask what wondrous things have we seen in God's law? Psalm 119:18
- Pray for each other and the lost.
- Prayer time (before meals, at bedtime, and all times the Spirit prompts you to pray)
- Reading time—read inspiring Christian biographies.
- Sit times (a period of time when your children practice simply sitting still)
- Memory time (read a memory verse 3 times before each meal. Record verses in a "memory book"- spiral bound 3X5 cards. Keep on kitchen table to review at mealtimes)

OTHER HELPS IN TRAINING YOUR CHILDREN TO WORSHIP WITH YOU

LOOK FORWARD TO SUNDAYS

As parents, look forward to Sundays, and if you currently do not, pray that you will. Your enthusiasm or lack of it will be contagious. Believe God's Truth that says: *"Better is one day in your courts than thousands*

elsewhere.” Rejoice with the Psalmist: “I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord.” A couple weeks ago our son Elijah had a birthday. These are highly celebrated occasions in our home. All year each child looks forward to his special day. He gets to choose the menu for the day and what he would like to do on his special date with dad. A couple days before the big event, I asked Elijah what he would like to do on his date with me. I’ll never forget his precious 5-year-old response, “Dad, could we go to church?” Unfortunately I was not able to find any worship services at 10 AM, Monday morning! Our young children will love what we love . . . football, fishing, Bible reading, running, scripture memory, singing, whistling, eating, and going to church.

PREPARE ON SATURDAY

Prepare on Saturday for Sunday. Prepare clothes. Plan and, if possible, prepare meals for Sunday. Prepare your body—get plenty of sleep. Prepare your heart—do not view any TV, videos, movies, magazines, books, or web stuff that is not conducive to the filling of the Holy Spirit. The enemy will try to make Sunday mornings a stress-filled frenzy. Planning and preparation will help to lessen the stress.

Plan on getting to church early. Depending on the number and ages of your children will determine how early. I’ve found this maxim to be true with getting children ready for church: the more and younger the children, the more margin of time will be required. Plan time for the things that will happen that you hadn’t planned. On the way to church talk with your children about the rules and expectations for church time. Before the service begins, take young children to the restroom, and then settle them in their seats. A playpen is available for infants and toddlers.

MAKE SUNDAYS HOLY DAYS

Make Sunday a Holy Day, a day that is different, unique, set apart from every other day. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.” (One of the ten commandments in Exodus 20:8)

Interact with children during worship—singing, praying quietly together during communion and explaining communion, helping find the Bible passages, helping fill in the blanks on the sermon outline, holding a hand, putting your arm around them, smiling at them, enjoying being with them. **PRAY**—Pray throughout the week for your children to have a desire to attend church, to exhibit self-control during church, and to be a blessing to the worshippers around you during church. Practice proper greeting and respect. Children are to greet adults using the adult’s title and last name, speaking clearly and looking at their eyes.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

Discuss with your family the purpose of church. Many people today mistakenly think that church is for them . . . what they can get out of it, how they can be served. God clearly states that church is to be about worshipping, serving, and ministering to Him. It’s not about you or me. Jesus said that He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life . . . (Matthew 20:28) We go to church to bless God, not to be blessed; however, when we bless God, we in turn will be blessed.

TALK WITH OTHERS

Talk and pray with other parents who have well-trained children. A word to fathers. Proverbs 17:6 says: “A child’s glory is their father.” There is something God-ordained about a father’s influence in the life of a child. This truth is why God specifically commands fathers to train, nurture, admonish, and instruct their children. (Ephesians 6:4) Dads, if you desire to worship in peace with your family, it’s up to you. Train. Instruct. Teach. Correct. Discipline. Set the standard, establish the expectations.

NEVER GIVE UP

You will give up trying to train your children to sit peacefully with you in church if you do not have an immovable conviction from God that families worshipping together is the way God has established to maintain generational faithfulness. Think long term. Set your mind on the spiritual benefits and blessings that you and your children will reap. Keep the goals before you: loving God, spiritual maturity, serving and ministering to others together, worshipping together, experiencing the presence of God together, seeing prayers answered, and lives transformed before your eyes . . . passing the faith to the next generation.

God’s Spirit is sweeping across the land. I cannot explain it. There are Christian parents all over who are experiencing an increasing desire to worship with their children. They are taking responsibility for the spiritual training and nurturing of their children. They are seeing that the world is seeking to steal the innocence, rob the morality, and kill the faith of their children. They are seeking a worship experience they can experience with their children. They have found the ancient path. They have heard and heeded the Voice behind them saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” Parents and children will worship together, pray together, sing together, read the Word together, memorize God’s Truth together, minister together, testify together, share the gospel together, and **change the world together**, just as God intended from the beginning of time.

For further information: www.simplydevoted.com