

Ten Tips for Introducing Your Child to Worship

Let your child get comfortable in the worship space.

1. Attend a child-friendly church.

A church that invites children to attend worship, that has a children's time during worship or a service in which children are included, will not mind the noise and commotion that comes with having young children in worship.



2. Bring your child to church on a day other than Sunday morning.

Call the church office and make an appointment with a pastor, Christian education director, or church school teacher. Go on a tour of the church facility, and locate the Sunday school rooms and bathrooms as well as the sanctuary. Let your child explore the sanctuary, see how it feels to sit in the pew, and leaf through the Bibles and hymnbooks. Look behind the pulpit, altar, and baptismal font, and explain the use of these.

3. Take home a worship bulletin and go through the service at home.

Show your child that there are times to sit, to stand (and in some places, to kneel), to sing, to pray, and to listen. If the Lord's Prayer is used, write down the words and let your child practice at home. Prepare offering envelopes and let your child put money in the envelope, and explain why the offering is important.

4. Play "Let's go to church" at home.

Practicing the worship service at home will help your child feel more comfortable with what happens in worship.

5. Read the Bible and pray at home.

Purchase an age-appropriate Bible for your child and read the stories. Let your child handle the Bible and encourage questions. You can explain that the Bible is where we learn God's story, and how we are part of that story. If you let prayer be a part of your everyday life, not just something you do at church, your child will understand its importance.

6. Sit near an aisle, near an exit.

If your child needs to go to the bathroom, or is feeling overly stimulated or having a disruptive day, don't be embarrassed. Walk your child out of the sanctuary until she can work off a little energy, and then come back in. This is much easier if you don't have to crawl across a row of other people in the pew!

7. Be prepared with a worship notebook or bag.

Many churches provide materials for children to use during worship, but if not, bring your own supplies. Coloured pencils can be used to mark the parts of worship in the bulletin as you go through them one by one. Get to church a few minutes in advance and use a bookmark to mark the hymns that will be sung that day. Have some colouring pages from a Bible colouring book for your child to colour, or some blank pages for doodling. This is not disrespectful, and can help your child listen more attentively. Have the words of the Lord's Prayer printed on a page for the child to follow, if he or she is of reading age. Let your child draw a picture of the anthem or hymns being sung, or the sermon, and give this to the choir director or pastor afterwards.

8. Teach basic church etiquette.

Speak to people before and after worship, and teach your child how to shake hands and greet others. If your child is shy, don't force it, but practice at home and let your child see you greeting others. Let the child put the hymnbook and Bible away after use, and be sure to take your bulletin with you, rather than leaving it in the pew. Meeting other people and taking care of the church facility helps a child feel that "This is my church!"

9. Get to know the pastor.

Pastors of child-friendly churches love to get to know the children of the church. Introduce your child to the pastor after worship, and participate in other church activities so that the pastor becomes a friend and not a scary adult.

10. Don't give up!

It may take awhile for your child to become comfortable in worship, and to learn how to sit quietly. The best way for this to happen is to attend worship on a regular basis. There may be days when it doesn't go well, but don't let this stop you from coming the following week. Practice makes perfect!

Inspired by [*Rufus and Ryan Go to Church!*](#) by Kathleen Bostrom, illustrated by Rebecca Thornburgh (CandyCane Press, an imprint of Ideals Publications).