
Sunday, November 19, 2017
Did You Know?

Children in Worship, Part 1

I love that our children worship alongside their parents every Sunday. As I sit in the front row, sometimes I stop singing and just listen, and it brings me so much joy when I hear the voices of our children singing and worshipping our beautiful Savior. I know for many parents (and maybe some singles too) that having our children in the service has not been easy. They can be a distraction. They can keep us from worshipping. They can be noisy, but even with all those challenges, why is it important that they remain with us?

Let me begin by looking at some history. In the past, as an immigrant church, families struggled with what to do with their kids during Sunday worship. They sensed an increasing gap, not only generationally, but also culturally and linguistically. This eventually led to removing the children from the main service and providing them a worship service in English. This is how many of us might have grown up and might be all we've known. We no longer have a language gap with our children.

Now, let's look at an even longer history. God's people, from the very beginning, worshiped as families. It's not as if they were in the same building (or tent), with the children in separate rooms. Rather, they all worshiped together, regardless of age. Where do we see this? We see it throughout the Bible. In Deuteronomy 6, the command is given for parents to be the primary spiritual teachers for children. Throughout Jewish history, from the Old Testament to the time of Jesus and even now, children accompanied their parents to worship. Even when we look at the history of the church, families worshiped together. Consider that the concept or idea of youth ministry is only 60 years old. It was birthed out of American pragmatism after the war. So, for nineteen and a half centuries of the church, families worshiped together and most churches today still worship in this way. I think it's important for all of us to know this.

As well, I think we should be careful not to look upon children as distractions, or that our worship must be free from any and all interruptions, especially when they come in the form of children or other special cases. I remember when I was a youth pastor; there was a student with some special needs. He'd always sit in the front row and from time to time, while I was in the middle of preaching a sermon, he'd let out a loud snore! Everyone heard it, but I tried my best not to be distracted by him. I would talk to him afterwards and, with a smile, tell him to try not to do that. He's now 33 years old and still remains my friend and fishing buddy, but I never dreamt that we should permanently remove him from the service. You see, children not only learn from grown-ups, but Jesus made it very clear that grown-ups are to learn from our children. He held them up as examples of sincere faith. What might you learn from the child sitting near you today?

More on this subject in the weeks to come.

Soli Deo Gloria
Pastor Peter