9 Creative Ways for Kids in Worship to Respond to God

Children in Worship, Worship for Children
(Part IV)

In this series, I am exploring ideas for how we can help kids in worship participate and feel included, particularly in these summer months when Sunday School is often on break. In earlier posts, I asked how we can help kids in worship become aware of God’s presence and how we can help children hear God’s Word through Scripture readings and the sermon. After the hearing of the Word, most worship services incorporate a time for responding to God’s Word through prayer, music, and the giving of the morning offering. In this post, I have compiled nine creative ways we can adapt these practices for kids in worship. Some of these are ideas that can only be put into practice by pastors or other church leaders, but some of them can be adapted by parents to use if their church doesn’t offer opportunities for kids to worship. A number of these ideas could also be incorporated into a family’s life and/or done in the home as a way of engaging in family spirituality.

Prayer Ideas for Kids in Worship

1) An Invitation to Write or Draw Prayers

Have 6 small pieces of paper for each child in worship. On 3 of the pieces, ask kids to write or draw 1 thing, person, or moment they’re grateful for. On 2 of the pieces of paper, ask kids to write or draw 2 people they would like the church or congregation to pray for. On the last piece of paper, ask kids to write or draw 1 thing they’d like to ask God for.

Have a way to collect the papers either during the service’s prayers or after and be sure to include any appropriate prayers in future liturgies or prayer chains. Asking kids in worship to pray is only half of the equation, we also need to show kids that their prayers are heard and important.
2) A Prayer Wall in the Sanctuary

A prayer wall can be as simple or as involved as you’d like to make it. At its core, it is a space set aside for prayers. Often butcher paper is put up so people can write or draw directly on “the wall,” but you could also use post-it notes and have people stick their prayers on the wall. Inviting adults to take part as well can add a sense of importance to the wall and can convey to kids that their prayers are as important as adult prayers. Just be sure that your paper and your supplies are low enough for kids to reach on their own.

3) A Body Prayer for Children

A third type of prayer that is great for children is body prayer. This type of prayer combines simple body movements with words or intentions, recognizing that when we engage our bodies we experience prayer differently. A quick google search will give you plenty of examples, or you can find books that provide pictures and instructions. You can also create your own, or better yet, have the children create their own. You can start either with a traditional prayer such as The Lord’s Prayer or ask kids what they’d like to pray for. In either case, take one phrase or idea at a time and ask kids what movement might best represent that part of the prayer. When you’ve come up with movements for each piece, put them together. Body Prayers could be introduced and created during a children’s moment and then done with the entire congregation later in the service, or they could be taught and led from the front during worship.

Music or Songs for Kids in Worship

1) Include Kid-Friendly Music in the Worship Service

If your church uses hymnals for the majority of its music, kids are often at a disadvantage if they can’t read or don’t know how to read music. We can help children feel included in worship, and help them to worship, by using some songs they are familiar with either from Sunday School or popular culture. Alternatively, you could be intentional about using some hymns regularly so kids could learn and become familiar with them.

2) Give Kids Instruments to Play

The Director of Music at the church where Adam works is incredibly talented, and he has been known to put tambourines, small drums, cymbals, maracas, and other small instruments in the pews before worship (or hand them out during worship) and have people play them during an upbeat hymn. This is a great way for kids who can’t read yet or don’t know how to read music to take part in the music of the service.

3) Children’s Choir

Children’s choirs often take the summer off, but if you have a core group of kids each week you might be able to have a summer kids choir that can sing during some of the worship services. Even if this isn’t a realistic possibility for your church during the summer, it is a great way to include kids in worship (and help kids to worship) during the year.
Offering Ideas for Kids in Worship

1) Noisy Offering

The church Adam served in Oregon had a children’s offering called ‘Noisy Offering.’ Once a month, kids in worship were given metal containers with which to collect the offering. On those Sundays, adults were encouraged to bring change for the offering so that it could be thrown into the bins to create a noisy offering. This offering was also given to a ministry that benefited children (in the community or in the world) and the children’s moment often centered around collecting this offering and explaining where the money was going and why giving money was part of worship.

2) Symbols of Gifts

Giving money is a good reminder that everything comes from God, and it can be a helpful way of symbolizing our commitment to the life and work of the church. But it can also obscure the fact that God calls us to give not only our money but also our time and our talents. Why put a basket full of items that symbolize different ways kids can give back to God, have kids pick one they want to do during the upcoming week, and then have them place it in the offering plate during the morning offering. You could introduce the concept during a children’s moment and ask kids to help brainstorm ways they could offer their lives back to God during their week.

3) Pictures of Offerings from the Week Prior

If providing a set of symbols for kids to choose from isn’t possible or appealing, give kids a sheet of paper on which they can draw a picture of either how they did serve God during the previous week or how they will serve God during the upcoming week. Be sure they have time to do this before the offering is collected so they can add their offering to the plate when it is passed and make sure to give examples to help kids start thinking about different ways they can offer their time or talents for God’s work in the world.

So ... there are 9 different ideas for how to help kids in worship respond to God through prayer, song, and the morning offering. What others ideas do you have or have you seen?

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