

Series on Marriage and the Family – Sermon 10 - 20/06/10 (am)

Children ...

Ephesians 6:1- 4

Theme: It is Biblical for children to be part of a gathered congregation for public worship.

Children in the New Testament Congregation

Q. What was their basic role?

A. Their presence! *Cf.* 6:1

Why were children present?

1. Practically they had to be there.

2. Because of Covenant Theology.

Children of believers are part of the
covenant community, *cf.*

Deuteronomy 29:10-12; Joshua 8:30-35;
Ephesians 6:1.

3. Because of the meaning of term

evkklhsi,a.

The term means *corporate singularity*.

Unless the text makes it clear
otherwise, it refers to one group of
people gathered in the same place at
the same time.

Snapshots from Church History

What does Church history say about children in public worship?

John Chrysostom [347–407 AD] preached to congregations that included children.

Martin Luther

When I preach ... I regard neither Doctors nor Magistrates, of whom are here in this church above forty; but I have an eye to the multitude of young people, children, and servants, of whom are more than two thousand. I preach to those, directing myself to them that have need thereof.

John Calvin. *This manner of proceeding seemed especially good to us, that children, who beforehand have practised some modest church song, sing in a loud distinct voice, the people listening with all attention and following heartily what is sung with the mouth, till all become accustomed to sing continually.*

C H Spurgeon

I begin to feel more and more that it is a mistake to divide the children from the congregation. I believe in special services for children but also have them worship with us. If our preaching does not teach children, it lacks some element it ought to possess. I like to see the congregation made up not all of the young, nor all of the old, but some of all sorts gathered together.

Dr D. M. Lloyd-Jones

Children were present as he preached.

He felt that you just could not tell when the Holy Spirit would grab their attention and make them listen.

John Piper

Two Sundays ago all the children in the first grade and over started attending the Sunday morning worship service with their parents or some other responsible adult instead of having a special children's service ... I thought it would be good to [explain why].

The departure from the practice of having children present in public worship came in the 1960s.

The reasons had more to do with modern psychology than Biblical or Church history!

Encouragement to Persevere!

Parents, over the next months your children will be with you in public worship. You will experience distraction, embarrassment, perspiration...

...but persevere!

*Christian parents, you have the
privilege and responsibility to train
your covenant child how to worship
the Lord in public.*

Others in the congregation, be supportive! Encourage! Pray!

Children, in church you are going to be with the adults. That is special! Try hard to worship the Lord by singing, praying, listening, bringing an offering.

Conclusion

A Church should feed the spirit and the mind

Of every taste, sex, age, that makes mankind;

None should be left out or left behind

(And if one is, will it be Major Thrales

Or young Ben Brown with dirty nails?).

*Or is church just a useful apparatus
To sort us out according to our
status?*

*As if the sidesman were to hear a
knock*

*At the west door and opening it,
take stock:*

*'Horn-rimmed specs, bank balance,
safe career?*

*Come in! Come in! We think you'll like
it here!'*

*But eight year old or toddler? Or just
A babe in arms? 'Well come in ... if you
must!'*

*Let us not become guilty like the
congregation in the poem!*

*Let us welcome the children and
encourage them.*

*Let us help their parents and guardians
as we meet as a community to
worship the Lord.*

*Let us train our covenant children how
to worship the Lord.*