

Hey! We're Not Praying!

Ponder: Children in the assembly

Scripture: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV).

What Christian parent hasn't been embarrassed by unruly children during church? Unfortunately, some simply stop bringing their children (and stop attending themselves) despite the encouragement of experienced parents that "this, too, shall pass." Obviously, Johnny and Susie can't learn to behave in church if Mama and Daddy don't take them.

One little three-year-old was chattering loudly during my sermon. His mom and grandma put their index fingers to their lips to admonish him: "Shhh! Shhh!" He exclaimed: "Hey! We're not praying!"

OK, you heard it here first: you're supposed to be quiet during prayer, but otherwise just talk to your heart's content!

I hope one day that little fellow realizes how blessed he is to have a mother and grandmother who love him enough to bring him to Bible class and the assembly, and to teach him how to behave there. He's a talker! That's ok. He will learn when it's appropriate to talk and when it isn't. Maybe he'll preach the gospel one day.

That's really the point of Proverbs 22:6. Solomon wasn't telling us that if we teach our children God's word, they'll be faithful all their lives. He was saying, in essence, that we should play to their strengths. Hebrew scholar Franz Delitzsch translates this way: "Give to the child instruction conformably to His way; so he will not, when he becomes old, depart from it."

Isn't it great to see the little ones imitating the song leader as he keeps time? Future song leaders in training! Yes, it can get out of hand and become distracting. Parents must control that. But don't squelch it completely!

Young Isaac Watts complained about the hymns at church. Rather than rebuke him for being disrespectful, his father told him if he didn't like them, write better ones. So he did – about 600 of them! (When I Survey The Wondrous Cross; Alas And Did My Savior Bleed? et. al.).

Thank God for little children! Next time yours misbehave in church, remember, "this, too, shall pass." They really will grow up – entirely too soon. Play to their strengths; teach them the joy of serving God.

Song: "Jesus Loves The Little Children"

Prayer: Almighty God, we thank you for our children and plead with You to help us raise them as we ought. Give us wisdom to help them develop the strengths you have given them. May they always know the joy of serving You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

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