

Leading Kids in Worship Masterclass

Session 1: The Church of Today

Key Theme

Childhood is not a prelude to spiritual formation—it is the heart of it. The church's mission to make disciples begins now, by teaching our children to worship.

Childhood and Faith Formation

Childhood passes quickly, and this truth should give us a *healthy sense of urgency*.

Research from Barna:

- A person's moral foundations are generally in place by **age 9**.
- Spiritual beliefs are largely **irrevocably formed by preteen years**.
- *"What you believe by the time you are 13 is what you will die believing."*

Our children aren't warming up to enter the game. They are in the big leagues!

Evaluating our Mission

Today's church invests more in children than ever before—modern spaces, curriculum, apps, and events.

But **by what biblical measures** are we excelling?

Do our children:

- Love Jesus with all their *heart, mind, soul, and strength* (Deut. 6)?
- Have God's Word impressed on their minds and *written on their hearts* (Prov. 3:3)?
- *Shout praise* like the children in Matthew 21?

Or do we, like the disciples, treat children as interruptions rather than blessings?

A Wake-Up Call: The Church Dropouts

Research from Barna: *"Nearly two-thirds (64%) of U.S. 18-29-year-olds who grew up in church have withdrawn from church involvement as adults."*

What will keep our children tethered to Christ?

It will not be immersive environments, the perfect VBS, or the right resources or apps.

It will be this: Our kids must become worshipers.

The way children learn to worship may be the most important spiritual formation of their lives.

Worship and the Heart

A worshiper's heart belongs to God.

Jesus' Teaching (Matt. 15:8-9): "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules."

- Worship and heart condition are inseparable.
- If hearts are far from God, our worship is *empty*.
- Even our teaching becomes "merely human rules."

Right behavior and knowledge are not enough. The distinguishing mark of a disciple is *love*.

Paul's Warning (1 Cor. 13:2): "If I do not have love, I am nothing."

In worship:

- We experience God's love.
- We express our love for God.
- God captures our hearts.

Worship is not simply an element of discipleship; it is the lifeblood of discipleship.

The Current Reality of Kids' Worship

Trends in the Church Today:

- Less congregational singing
- Less Scripture in songs
- Less intergenerational connection in worship
- Fewer kids' choirs and musical programs
- Fewer kids and students involved in worship ministry

In many churches, responsibility for children's worship has shifted from **worship leaders** to **children's ministry leaders**.

This change may:

- Give children's leaders a role they don't feel equipped for.
- Disconnect worship leaders from the children of their church.

Hope for the Future

An incredible opportunity lies before us: A generation of kids is ready to experience the love of their Savior and love him in return.

God longs for each child to delight in him, to worship him, to seek him.

Jesus' Call to Action (John 4:35): "Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

- A harvest does not remain ripe forever.
- Look over your harvest field—your family, your ministry, or your church.
- *Awaken your heart* to the urgency of today.

Teaching kids to worship is not a job for tomorrow. Today is the day.

Discussion Questions

1. What areas of your ministry or family might God be calling you to focus on *today* instead of waiting for *someday*?
2. How does your church currently view and value childhood in its overall mission? In what ways does that perspective shape the way you disciple children?
3. When you think about worship in your church, how much attention is given to forming hearts—both young and old—rather than following rules or acquiring knowledge?
4. Consider your own church's structure: who helps shape the worship life of children, and how could different ministries partner more effectively to nurture worshipers?
5. John 4:35 reminds us that the fields are ripe for harvest. What might a "harvest" of young worshipers look like in your setting, and what first steps could you take to move toward it?