

Leading Kids in Worship Masterclass

Session 4: Planning a Great Service

Key Theme

Every church has a liturgy—a sacred rhythm of worship that reveals what we believe about God.

Every Church Has a Liturgy

When we hear the word liturgy, we often think of mainline denominations. But the truth is, every church has one.

Liturgy comes from the Latin *liturgia*, meaning “public worship.” It’s simply our sacred rhythm of corporate worship.

The question isn’t whether we have a liturgy—but what should our liturgy be. How do we plan services that honor God and form worshipers?

Moderating a Conversation

We’re not planning a presentation; we are moderating a conversation.

Worship planning begins with one question: **“God, what do you want to say?”**

Author Parker Palmer coined the term *functional atheism* to describe Christians who profess belief in God but live as if he did not exist. Many of us plan and lead worship as functional atheists.

Asking this question is not looking to move beyond Scripture. It’s an invitation to press into Scripture in a new, fresh way every week.

Let the worship dialogue of revelation and response begin in your own heart before you invite your children to enter the conversation.

Prepare a Feast

After Jerusalem’s wall was rebuilt, Ezra read the Law aloud while the people stood for six hours—and *all listened attentively!*

When they finished, they feasted together. Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared.” (Neh. 8:10)

When people who are hungry for God encounter him, they can't get enough. As Eugene Peterson wrote, *"Worship does not satisfy our hunger for God—it whets our appetite."*

Each week, we're preparing a feast for our kids—and God's Word is the main course.

Gathering

The gathering moment reminds us that something sacred is happening—God's people are entering the presence of their King.

Psalms 95:1-7 is a beautiful model. It identifies three things a call to worship should include:

Person: Who is involved in this conversation?

God, "the great King above all gods," and us, "the people of his pasture."

Purpose: Why are we here?

To "sing for joy," to "shout aloud," to "extol him with music and song."

Posture: How do we enter God's presence?

We "bow down in worship" and "kneel before the Lord our Maker."

You might begin with Scripture, a personal reflection, or a song of praise—the key is intentionality.

Don't make the mistake of believing your kids' service is less sacred. The sacredness of this time is not about the people. It's about God.

Sending

The close of worship is as important as the beginning. We gather with purpose, and we are sent with purpose.

A sending moment often includes two parts: a **call to service** and a **benediction**.

The **call to service** reminds kids of their purpose in the world. For instance:

- "You were created on purpose with a purpose."
- "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."
- A "sending" Scripture, such as the Great Commission.

The **benediction** is a reminder that the blessing of God goes with us.

The Aaronic Blessing:

“The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Num. 6:24-26)

Without God’s blessing, we are empty, but we never leave his presence empty-handed.

A sending element teaches kids that the conversation of worship is not over—it continues in another form. As Rory Noland writes, *“We’re simply moving from one scene to another in a life of continual worship.”*

Two Essentials

There’s no right set of songs or correct service order. No formula works for everyone.

Essential One: The Word of God

When we think of Scripture in worship, we often think of the sermon. But God’s Word is not just for the message—it is meant to be the center of everything we do.

Each element of worship contains both revelation and response, so each must be built on the foundation of God’s Word.

Essential Two: Lead with People

Of all kids’ worship formats, the least effective is simply playing a video on a screen. Screens are for watching—and without leadership, that’s all most kids will do.

We see the best results when we lead from the stage in the way we want kids to participate.

Great Freedom, Great Responsibility

Beyond these essentials, there is great freedom. Be guided by what works for your context.

- What songs do your kids love?
- What service flow keeps their attention on God?
- What worship elements form the kind of worshipers God desires?

Keep the focus on what works for your kids, not just what’s comfortable for you.

The most important thing is our intentional, prayerful approach to the conversation of worship.

Discussion Questions

1. How does your church's current liturgy—your regular order of worship—shape what kids believe about God?
2. What does it look like for you to begin worship planning by asking, "God, what do you want to say?"
3. How could you make your gathering and sending moments more intentional in your kids' service?
4. In what ways can you make Scripture more central to every part of your worship service—not just the lesson?
5. What will your liturgy teach children about who God is and how he deserves to be worshiped?