

Leading Kids in Worship Masterclass

Session 5: Apprenticeship and Prayer

Key Theme

A worshiping heart can't be handed down—it must be formed experientially through participation and practice. And prayer is a great place to start!

Reinventing: Experiential Learning

All of us know what it's like to learn the hard way—in other words, to learn from experience. Lessons learned the hard way stick with us.

Psychologist Jean Piaget called this process “reinventing”—learning for yourself something others already know. He wrote, *“The essential thing is that in order for a child to understand something, he must construct it for himself; he must reinvent it.”*

A worshiping heart cannot be transmitted by a parent, preacher, or teacher. The child must participate in its creation.

The Model of Apprenticeship

In *Practicing the Way*, John Mark Comer presents a model of spiritual formation that is more experiential than intellectual—the model of apprenticeship. He writes, *“[Apprentice] is such a helpful word. It conjures a mode of education that is intentional, embodied, relational, and practice-based.”*

These four words give us checkpoints for teaching kids to worship:

- **Intentional** – we teach purposefully toward a specific goal.
- **Embodied** – we're not just teaching a concept but forming behavior.
- **Relational** – we teach in the context of relationship with our kids and with God.
- **Practice-based** – we teach through active participation, not passive consumption.

This last point is critical. We teach kids to be worshipers not by instruction alone, but by participation.

Four Foundational Worship Actions

There are four foundational worship actions in Scripture: **read God's Word, pray, sing, and serve.**

We can think of these as one foundational revelation (God's Word) and three foundational responses (pray, sing, serve).

These core worship actions are not just scriptural—they're also validated by research. A 2017 Lifeway study identified four behaviors most predictive of lifelong faith:

- A child regularly read the Bible
- A child regularly prayed
- A child listened primarily to Christian music
- A child regularly served in church

Reading God's Word

At every opportunity, in ways suited to their age, bring kids into direct contact with Scripture.

A love for the Word of God is crucial to their faith development.

The Importance of Prayer

Prayer was vital in the early church, perhaps more vital than anything else. *Acts 1:14* says the believers were "constantly in prayer." They prayed frequently, boldly, passionately, and together.

Tim Keller writes, *"Prayer ... is the way we know God, the way we finally treat God as God. Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life. We must learn to pray. We have to."*

We cannot awaken worshiping hearts without teaching children to pray.

Teaching Children to Pray

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray" (Lk. 11:1), he didn't lecture—he simply prayed.

That makes worship the perfect place to start. It's one of the primary contexts where kids see prayer in action.

They learn the language of prayer by hearing others pray, reading Scripture, and singing worship songs. And they learn the **practice** of prayer by praying together.

Zac Hicks reminds us, *"We're not only facilitating prayer on Sundays. We're training Christians to pray Monday through Saturday."*

Three Kinds of Prayer

Of the many kinds of prayer, three are especially accessible for children: **petition, intercession, and thanksgiving.**

Petition: Praying for Our Needs

Philippians 4:6: “In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Expressing our needs to God is not selfish—it glorifies him. Jeff Wells writes, *“Every time we ask God for something, it inherently glorifies God.”*

God is not reluctant to hear our needs. Jesus taught us to ask! For young children, these prayers may be simple—and that’s okay.

Intercession: Praying for Others

When we pray for others, we follow the example of Jesus and Paul.

One great story to use with kids is the friends who lowered a paralyzed man through the roof to reach Jesus. We, too, can bring others into God’s presence through prayer.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, *“Offering intercessory prayer means nothing other than Christians bringing one another into the presence of God ... to stand before Christ and share in Christ’s mercy.”*

Thanksgiving: Praying Our Gratitude

As we pray for ourselves and others, we see God’s faithfulness—and gratitude grows. “I need you, Lord” and “Thank you, Lord” are two sides of the same coin.

Celebrate answered prayers with your kids.

We also express our gratitude for who God is.

Teach your kids to **worship in an attitude of prayer** and **pray in an attitude of worship.**

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean that a worshiping heart must be “reinvented,” not transferred?
2. How can you model apprenticeship—intentional, embodied, relational, and practice-based—in your worship ministry?
3. Which of the four foundational worship actions (read, pray, sing, serve) are strongest in your context? Which need development?
4. What steps could you take to make prayer a true lifeblood of your children’s ministry?
5. How can you help kids practice these three kinds of prayer—bringing their needs, praying for others, and thanking God?