

# **Making Room for Children in Church - A Guide for Parents and Friends of Children**

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**(Prov 22:6 KJV) Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.**

**Please read and study carefully the book of 1st Peter.**

**Children at Worship** - Our worship services include an increasing number of families with children. The inclusion of these children in worship is of great importance. We welcome children to worship by:

## **Providing a family worship service each Sunday & Wednesday.**

Encouraging families to bring their children of all ages to the family worship.

Children are an important and welcomed part of our worshipping community.

Providing childcare for infants and toddlers through age five during worship

Encouraging older children to participate in worship & family prayer

Encouraging parents to take responsibility for their children

Providing exciting lessons and activities for young children based on a Gospel lesson and having pictures, storybooks and crafts in their classes.

Modeling appropriate church behavior for children by teaching them to stand, sit, or kneel with the congregation. An effective teaching method is to gradually lengthen the time a child remains in church.

Children can usually be expected to participate in an entire service in an orderly manner by the time they enter second grade.

## **The Preschool Child**

Adults may question the wisdom of including preschool children in worship. It is true that they sometimes distract those around them and distress parents by their behavior. But as members of the family, they are needed by all of us to complete the circle at God's table.

### **The preschool child comes to worship with:**

A short attention span. Seemingly endless energy. A growing curiosity about everything.

While these ingredients can combine to test the patience of adults, there are several things parents can do to make the preschooler's experience—and everyone's—more relaxed and enjoyable:

Sit near the front where the child can have a clear view of the sanctuary.

Prepare the child for the different parts of the worship service, explaining special events ahead of time and answering questions that need an answer "right now" in a whisper.

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Allow the preschooler to bring along a favorite stuffed animal, picture books, coloring books or other quiet toys to play with when they get bored.

Encourage as much adult-like behavior as the child can tolerate.

Allow children to be active within limits of the situation, as long as the activity is not distracting others.

Use the quiet time of church as a chance for a special togetherness of parents and child, which may not be possible during the week.

A sensitivity to the preschooler's abilities and needs can help make worship a pleasant experience for everyone.

### **The Primary Child - The school-age child brings some new abilities to worship:**

A greater capacity for attentive listening.

An increasing ability to read.

The ability to organize and memorize information.

Parents help the primary child toward greater participation in worship as these capacities develop when they:

Help memorize the Lord's Prayer and other parts of the Christian services.

Review the bulletin or lesson info with the child to identify new or difficult words and preview together those parts where the congregation responds by reading and speaking.

Find hymns in The Hymnal and go over the words.

Talk about the sermon and ask the primary child what he or she remembers best about it.

Encourage the child to listen to the sermon for stories, answers to questions or important thoughts.

### **Worship and Learning**

Worship is one of the basic ways people learn what it means to be Christian. Children learn worship by worshipping with the congregation Sunday after Sunday.

They learn they belong to Christ and are welcome in His Church.

They learn to know the Lord's Prayer and other parts of the liturgy from memory.

They build a fund of memorable, shared experiences of Christian community against which they may draw when they are older.

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They are enriched by the beauty of music and art as expressions of praise and as human responses to God.

They hear stories from the Bible read and interpreted, and begin to see Christian worship as one place where God may speak to them.

They witness the drama of baptism, invitational responses, the Lord's Supper and many other signs of God's kindness and favor.

They discover that they are valued as persons by God and by the people of God at Church.

Bringing children to worship may not always be easy, but it is an essential part of their growth in Christ. The Body of Christ assembled is incomplete in their absence. We need children.

(Mat 19:14 KJV) But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

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### **ABC's for Parents and Friends of Children**

**A**rrive in time to find a good place to sit. Sitting near the front will provide younger children with a better view of the sanctuary.

**B**ring quiet toys, books, or coloring books for preschool and early elementary school age children.

**C**lue in children as to what will happen next in worship. Children who can read will want to follow the service in the Bible and find hymns in The Hymnal. Children like to be ready.

**D**iscuss worship at home to prepare children for any departures from the routine of worship such as Baptism or other special features. Also give time to answer questions about worship experiences.

**E**xpress your gladness at having children in worship. During the Peace be sure to welcome the children near you. Include them in you conversations before and after worship to let them know they belong.

**F**ree yourself from worry about children's behavior and be open to receiving their ministry to you.

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### **Behavior Principles and Guidelines for Children**

We love children at College Heights Baptist Church and are thrilled to have them among us. They are not only the future of this church but they are the means by which the fame of the Lord's name will be carried to the next generation. We who labor on behalf of children, youth, and their parents take our responsibility seriously and want to do all we can to nurture faith in these children and to encourage their

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parents. This responsibility is what has inspired and informed these principles and guidelines for behavior at College Heights Baptist Church. If you would like an expanded description of the philosophy and theology behind these principles and guidelines, please contact the pastor or the church office.

There are at least three convictions, which have motivated the development of these **"Behavioral Guidelines for Children"** at College Heights Baptist Church

### **THREE CONVICTIONS**

**First**, we are a family and it is important for certain boundaries to be in place for the sake of the "family." Stewardship of church property, the safety of others and the safety of our children are at stake. A child running through the foyer on a Sunday morning may not be a concern to most people but for a 75-year-old woman, who is shaky on her feet and terrified of a broken hip, a running child poses a very serious threat.

**Second**, children who are well disciplined and under control honor the Lord, honor their parents and are a positive reflection of the ministry of our church. If this is true, then the opposite is also true. Unruly children dishonor the Lord and are an embarrassment to their parents and to the church

(Prov 29:15 KJV) The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

(1 Tim 3:4 KJV) One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

(1 Tim 3:5 KJV) (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

**Third**, and probably most important, is that discipline is an important part of nurturing faith in our children. To follow Jesus is to obey Jesus and to submit to His authority. Cultivating an obedient spirit in our children and teaching them to yield to God-given authorities in their lives helps to prepare their hearts to obey Christ and to bend their wills to His.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**1.** Although it is possible to control the outward actions of a child and produce a desired behavior, the goal of our ministry to young people is to direct their hearts toward God and cultivate a spirit, which is responsive to Him. True obedience and discipline flows from a heart that is responsive to the Lord. It is not merely the conformity to an external set of rules. Therefore, if we are concerned about the behavior of our children, the most important thing that parents and youth-workers can do is to seek God's help in nurturing hearts of faith out of which acts of righteousness will flow.

**2.** We will maintain high standards for behavior at College Heights Baptist Church but we are also committed to being fair and realistic about our expectations of children.

If a child only had six hours of sleep the night before, we should not be surprised if

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he has difficulty sitting still in church. If a preschooler is expected to sit quietly for a lengthy service, we are probably expecting too much.

If there are 45 minutes of unstructured time between a social event and worship service, we should not be surprised if children will get into mischief. We will do our best to consider children and their limits and try to accommodate their needs as much as possible.

**3.** Parents are ultimately responsible for the behavior of their children. We will expect parents to keep their children under control during public gatherings and to make sure that their children are always under adult supervision. When under the supervision of a youth or children's worker at College Heights Baptist Church, that worker will be expected to maintain order and appropriate behavior of the children in his care. If a child is not responsive to any of the permissible forms of classroom discipline, the child will be taken to his parents.

**4.** The raising of children is also a community responsibility. As a church family we gladly stand with parents and are eager to do all we can to support and encourage them in their parenting responsibilities. We consider it a serious responsibility to teach the full counsel of God and inspire children in faith, in love and in righteousness. Some children will struggle with behavioral problems more than others. The pastors and church workers of our church are eager to pray, strategize and work with parents to find solutions.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF CHILDREN**

Although the behavioral boundaries vary depending on the age of the child, the activity they are involved in, and where that activity takes place, most rules will fall under one of four basic teaching goals which we have for the children at College Heights Baptist Church.

#### **Respect for the House of the Lord**

Children will be expected to treat church buildings, furnishings and equipment in a way that honors the Lord and to use those things in the way that they were intended. Specifically, children will be encourage to stand only on floors, not on chairs, tables, balcony ledges, windowsills. Children should refrain from running in aisles or church corridors. Paper is an appropriate medium for artistic expression, not walls or furniture. Trash belongs in trash containers. Space and equipment should be left in the same or better condition than it was found. Items such as pianos, microphones, the pulpit and its furnishings should be avoided unless permission to use these items has been obtained. The stage, class rooms, nursery, toddler center, teen room is off limits to everyone unless they have had permission and reason for being on the stage or in the specified areas. Children or their parents may be asked to accept responsibility for accidental or intentional damage to church property or equipment.

No child or children may be in any of the rooms of the church without being supervised by an adult or approved teen worker with the exception of the bathrooms.

#### **Respect for Adults**

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We want the children of College Heights Baptist Church to honor the adults in the church with respectful speech and behavior. Talking back or defying the instruction or correction of an adult are examples of what is considered disrespectful. We also will encourage children to use Brother, Sister, Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss, when addressing adults.

We will endeavor to provide a physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe environment for every child involved at College Heights Baptist Church. Children will be encouraged to think before they speak and find encouraging things to say to others. Therefore, mean, crude or hurtful speech or actions toward others is not acceptable.

### **Respect for Themselves**

We will encourage children not to act in ways that will put their bodies or their faith at risk.

### **Respect for others.**

We will encourage children not to act in ways that will put cause harm to themselves or others. This includes name calling and anything that our approved staff deems as wrong behavior.

### **A WORD ABOUT CORRECTION**

We believe that discipline should be primarily positive and so we encourage parents and those who work with children to be quick to encourage and affirm positive behavior. We also encourage immediate and consistent response to negative behavior before it escalates into a serious problem. If the parents are present we will expect them to correct their children when they misbehave. We will also encourage other adults not to ignore a behavior problem when they see it. If someone else speaks to your child, please do not be offended or insulted. If parents are not present, the person in charge may respond by first speaking to the child and issuing a warning. If the child persists in the behavior, he or she may be denied a privilege or even be isolated from the group. The last resource available to the worker is to take the child to his parents. The last effort of correction would be to ban the child from attending.

Since it is our conviction that parents are the appropriate persons to employ corporal punishment when needed (and this is best carried out privately), any physical form of correction is considered unacceptable in the classroom or any other group setting. Those working with children and youth are only permitted to gently restrain a child to keep him or her from hurting himself or another. Every church worker has the right to lead a child by the hand or arm to the proper persons in charge.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please discuss this with your children. If you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact the church office

### **NOTES TO PARENTS:**

No one is allowed in the nursery or toddler area without proper permission from the nursery director or the pastor. This is to control overcrowding of our area in order to protect your children. The nursery is a privilege and must be understood as such.

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Our workers are volunteers and no one is allowed to abuse our workers in any way form or fashion. If there are disputes or misunderstanding we ask you to contact the pastor directly first in order to keep harmony with in our boundaries.

It is the parents responsibility to bring all clothing, and personal items for your child. You must provide a dry change of clothing for all infants and toddlers upon arrival. Please mark all your personal items and your child's items with their name on those items.

Thank you for your co-operation and we look forward to ministering to you and with you.

God bless  
Dr Rick Honea, Sr. Pastor