



What to do with Children in Church?

PASTOR PHIL HUEBNER











The Look











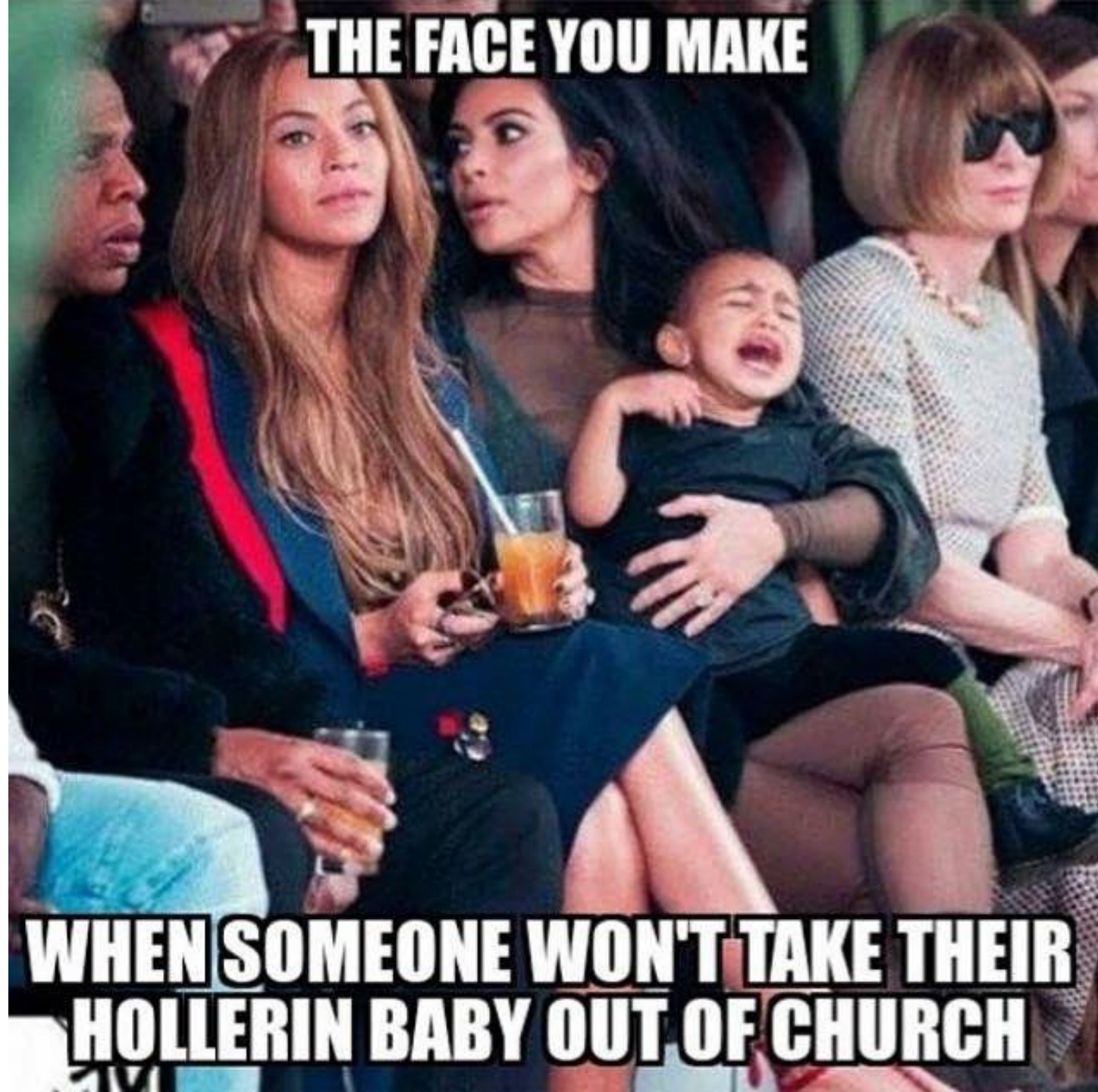


WHEN PEOPLE LET THEIR KIDS



RUN AROUND THE SANCTUARY

THE FACE YOU MAKE



**WHEN SOMEONE WON'T TAKE THEIR
HOLLERIN BABY OUT OF CHURCH**

Whoever wrote the phrase "Easy Like Sunday Morning" obviously never had to get a child ready for Church.

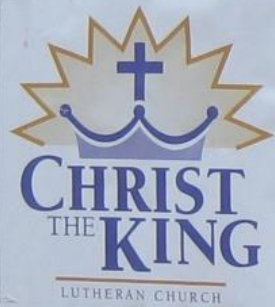


somee cards
user card

Real Life
Example

CHRIST THE KING
PALM COAST, FL

3



Worship at
10:00 AM

386-237-4368

www.ctkpalmcoast.com

3



Worship at
10:00 AM
386-237-4368
www.ctkpalmcoast.com

CHRIST
THE KING
LUTHERAN CHURCH



























Incredible blessings . . .

- 300 members
- 110 (40%) were children under age 13
- 69% of members was Lutheran for less than 3 years
- Average age of the congregation was 28

Incredible challenges...

- LOTS of young children
- LOTS of families new to church
- Fantastic acoustics + lots of families & children = noise
- Angry old people
- Angry and hurt parents

Let the children come to me

**unless they're crying during my sermons;
then give their parents the stink-eye.**

#thingsjesusneversaid



The BIG problem

What do you do with children in church?

Biblical Principles & Thoughts on Children



“

Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

”

GENESIS 1:28

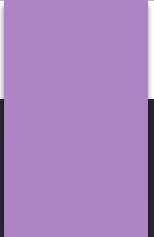


“

Sons are a heritage from the LORD,
children a reward from him.

”

PSALM 127:3



“ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ”

PSALM 139:13-14



“

He who spares the rod hates his son, but
he who loves him is careful to discipline
him.

”

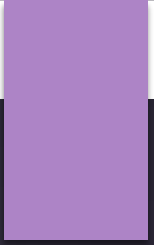
PROVERBS 13:24

“

Train a child in the way he should go, and
when he is old he will not turn from it.

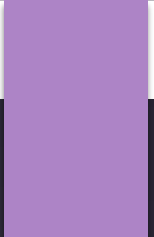
”

PROVERBS 22:6



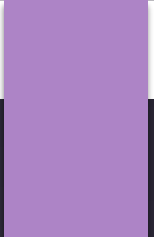
“ Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. ”

DEUTERONOMY 4:9



“ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. ”

DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9



“ O my people, hear my teaching. . . We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. ”

PSALM 78:1-7

“

As for me and my household, we will
serve the Lord.

”

JOSHUA 24:15

Key Thoughts

- ▶ Children are a blessing
- ▶ Children uniquely created and cared for by God
- ▶ Children are to be disciplined
- ▶ Children are to be taught the ways of the Lord
- ▶ Parents are called first to raise and teach children



Children and Worship: Biblical Examples

Cain and Abel



“

At that time men began to call
on the name of the Lord.

”

GENESIS 4:26

Abraham and Isaac



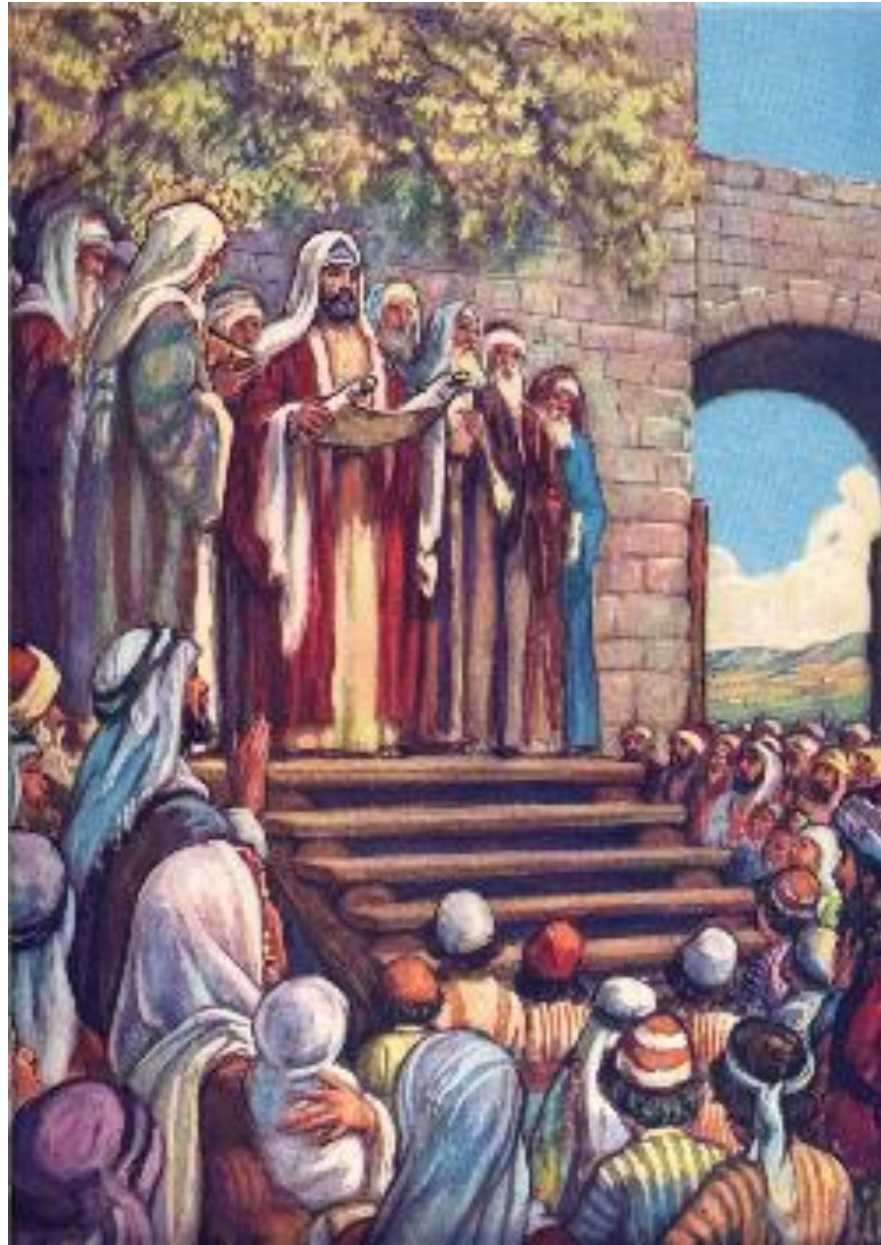
Solomon and the Temple



“ King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted. ”

1 KINGS 8:5

Josiah and the Law



“ He went up to the temple of the Lord with the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. ”

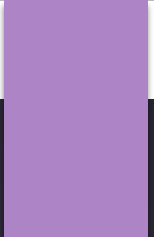
2 KINGS 23:2

“ Rend your heart and not your garments . . .
Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy
fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the
people, consecrate the assembly; **bring
together the elders, gather the children,
those nursing at the breast.** ”

JOEL 2:13, 15-16

Ezra Confesses





“ While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly. ”

EZRA 10:1

Other examples

- Baby John the Baptist
- The boy Jesus in the temple
- Sermon on the Mount
- Feeding of 4,000/5,000
- Jesus in Nazareth on the Sabbath
- "Let the little children . . ."
- The "faith of a child" examples

Other examples

- Peter's Pentecost sermon
- Practice of the early church in Acts 2
 - "all the believers"
- Lydia and the jailer at Philippi and families
- Practice of reading NT letters
 - "Children, obey"

Key Thoughts

- ▶ Acts of worship were taught by parents early on
- ▶ No act of worship was “too much” for children
- ▶ In events of public proclamation or worship, children always seemed to be present
- ▶ Children are the example of faith in life and worship

So what happened?

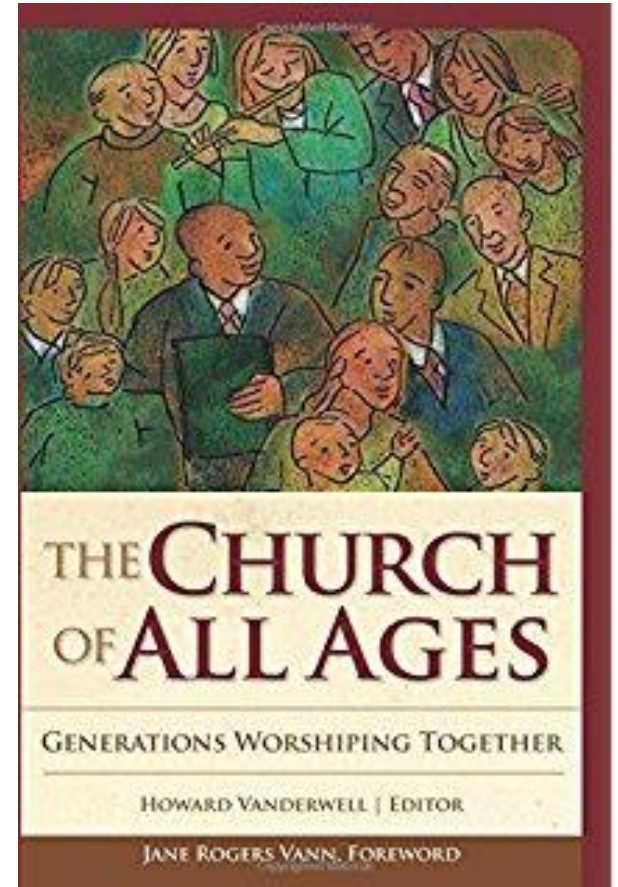


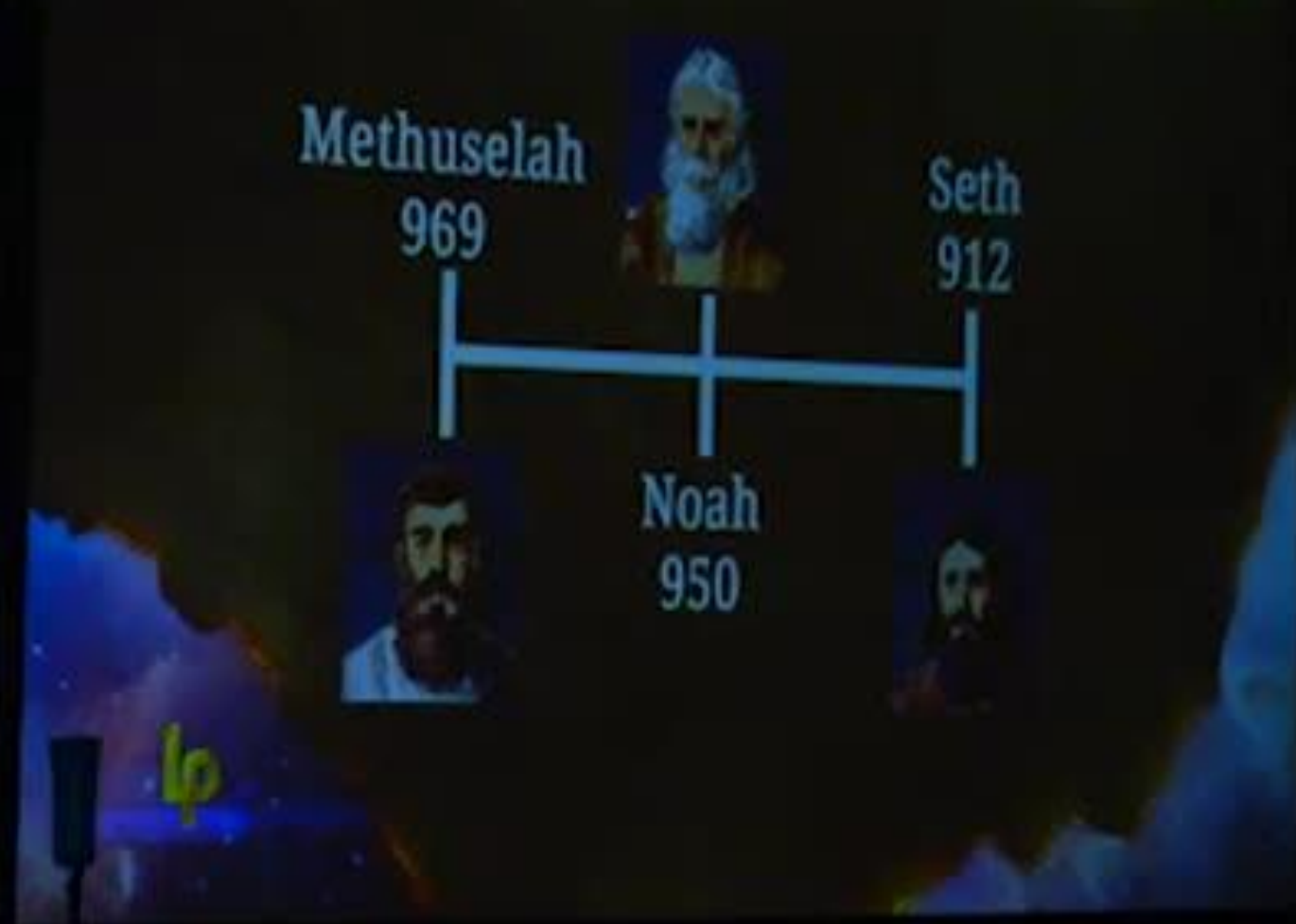
Society Issues

- ▶ Age segregation
- ▶ Church growth "expert" recommendations
- ▶ Entrenched individualism
- ▶ Piaget and developmental stage considerations
- ▶ Technology affects attention spans
- ▶ Technology creates "entertainment-driven" people
- ▶ Consumerist society

Worship Issues

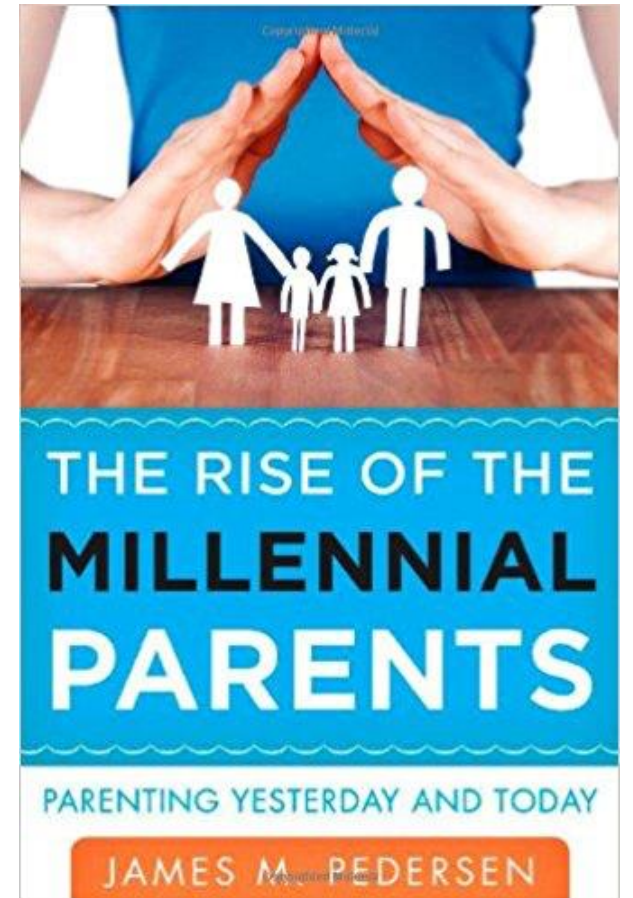
[Hugh Koops in 1967] asserted that the sermon had become the major instrument for adult education rather than a proclamation of what God has done in Jesus Christ; the sanctuary had become a classroom for adults rather than worship for all generations, and consequently children found themselves 'in the wrong classroom on Sunday morning.' This shifting view of worship, combined with new insights from developmental psychology that emphasized teaching for learning, rather than preaching for response, created a fertile environment for fostering alternative worship services for children."





PARENT Issues

- ▶ Parents riddled with information
- ▶ Parents don't feel obligated to practice methods of their parents
- ▶ Rising divorce rates
- ▶ Changing family dynamics
- ▶ Children maturing early
- ▶ 55 different parenting styles!



PARENT Issues, continued

- ▶ New generations of undisciplined children are now parents
- ▶ New parents don't know how to discipline
- ▶ Society trains parents to expect someone else to take care of their kids
- ▶ "Me time"





How yo mom look when the pastor says something about disobedient children.



Your momma at church when the pastor say something about disobedient children



**YOU TEACH YOUR KIDS HOW TO
"NAE-NAE"**

**BUT CAN'T TEACH THEM HOW TO
"PRAY-PRAY"**



Who is really the problem?

History Repeats Itself

“The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism, or Christian instruction, in such a brief, plain, and simple version. Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments! As a result they live like simple cattle or irrational pigs and, despite the fact that the gospel has returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all their freedom.”



Pros & Cons of Different Solutions

What do you do with
children in church?

Unwise and Silly Solutions

- ▶ Intergenerational worship that is "forcin' it"
- ▶ Turning worship into VBS
- ▶ Liturgical clowns





Better Solutions (kind of)



Nursery / Cry Room



JONAH AND THE WHALE

EXIT



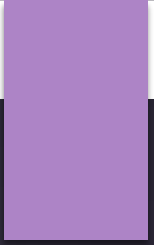
A close-up photograph of a baby with light skin and blue eyes, wearing a pink hoodie. The baby has a determined, slightly angry expression with furrowed brows and a slightly open mouth. The background is dark and out of focus.

NURSERY?

I DON'T THINK SO!

Nursery / Cry Room

- ▶ Helpful for newbies
- ▶ Some days are just bad days for tots and tykes
- ▶ Some set ups are great
- ▶ AV to watch and listen
- ▶ Adequate space?
- ▶ Staffing?
- ▶ What ages?
- ▶ What are we teaching?
- ▶ Do ushers step in ever??



Children's Sermons



**THIS WAS THE DAY THE PASTOR BELIEVED
IT WHEN THEY SAID THE CHILDREN'S SERMON
WAS ACTUALLY BETTER THAN THE MAIN SERMON.**



Children's Sermon

- ▶ Proclaim gospel on “their level”
- ▶ Memorable message for children
- ▶ Shows pastor's care
- ▶ Friendly, loving
- ▶ Often not done well
- ▶ Disrupts flow of worship
- ▶ Those awkward moments
- ▶ Forced messages
- ▶ Does it really fix the problem?
- ▶ What are we teaching?

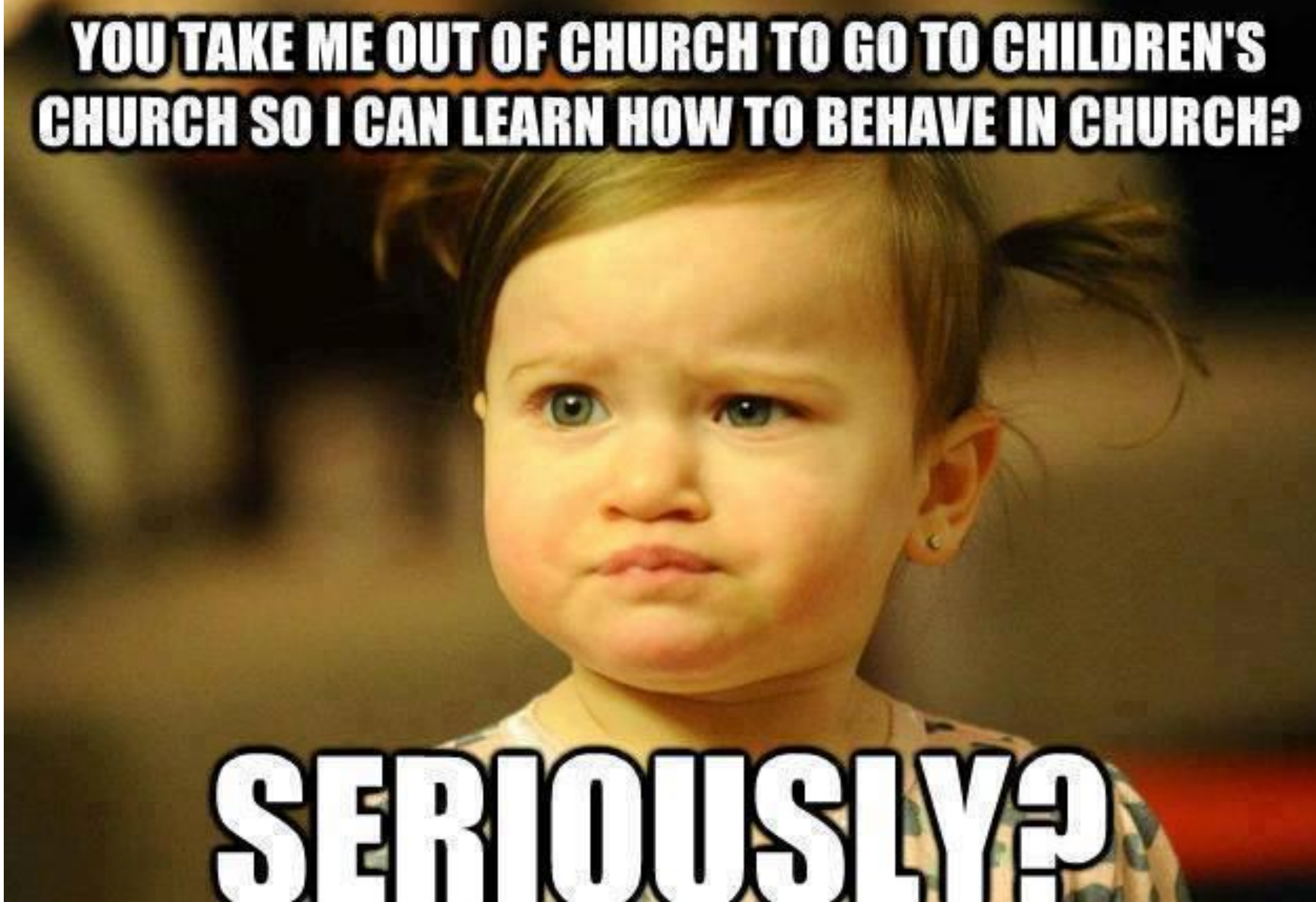


Children's Church



**YOU TAKE ME OUT OF CHURCH TO GO TO CHILDREN'S
CHURCH SO I CAN LEARN HOW TO BEHAVE IN CHURCH?**

SERIOUSLY?



Children's Church

- ▶ “Age appropriate” training ground
- ▶ Training in the words and songs of worship
- ▶ Training in reverence and decorum
- ▶ Opportunity for parents to focus
- ▶ What is really going on?
- ▶ Glorified Sunday School?
- ▶ What ages?
- ▶ Staffing!
- ▶ What are we teaching?
- ▶ Parent mindset



Concurrent Sunday School



I am
God is

Teacher (woman in grey jacket)

Woman in brown jacket

Woman in red dress

Children with hands raised

Children at tables

Children standing

Child on the right

A young boy with short brown hair is shown from the chest up, covering his eyes with both hands. He has a slightly embarrassed or shy expression. He is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a chain-link fence and a concrete wall.

WHEN I WAS A KID...

**I THOUGHT "HOW GREAT THOU ART"
WAS ABOUT GOD'S ART**

Concurrent Sunday School

- ▶ One hour bang for the buck
- ▶ Teach what parents may not know
- ▶ Parents can focus
- ▶ What ages?
- ▶ Staffing!
- ▶ What are we teaching?
- ▶ Parent mindset
- ▶ Worship is different than education!

Observations

- ▶ How much of this is driven by parent opinion?
- ▶ How much of this is just because it's easier?
- ▶ How much is claimed to be done in the name of the gospel?
- ▶ Do these solutions reflect biblical or historic practice?
- ▶ How much is due to a misunderstanding of what worship is?



Who is really the problem?



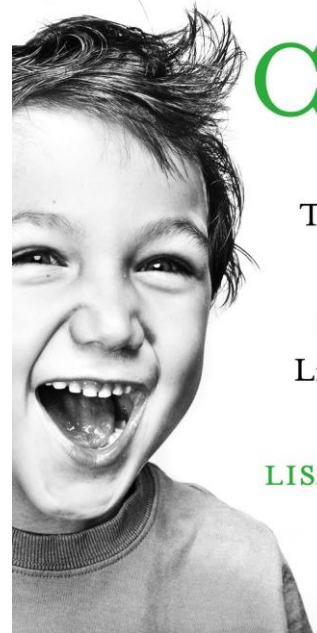
Working towards the ideal

Training parents to train children

Spirituality of Children

- ▶ 100% scientifically proven that children are created “spiritual”
 - ▶ (DUH)
- ▶ Children born as sinners needs a life in the Means of Grace

THE SPIRITUAL CHILD

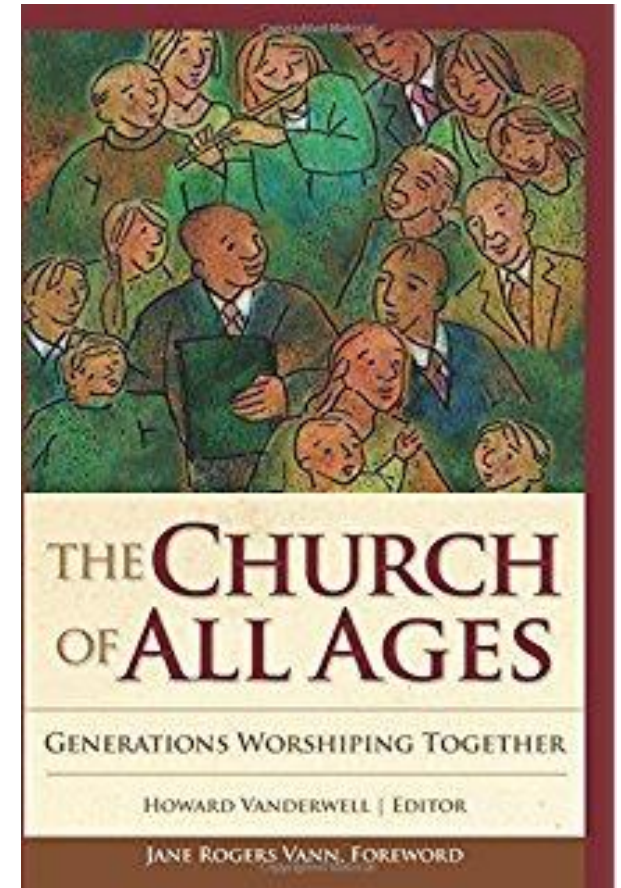


The New Science
on Parenting
for Health and
Lifelong Thriving

LISA MILLER, PH.D.

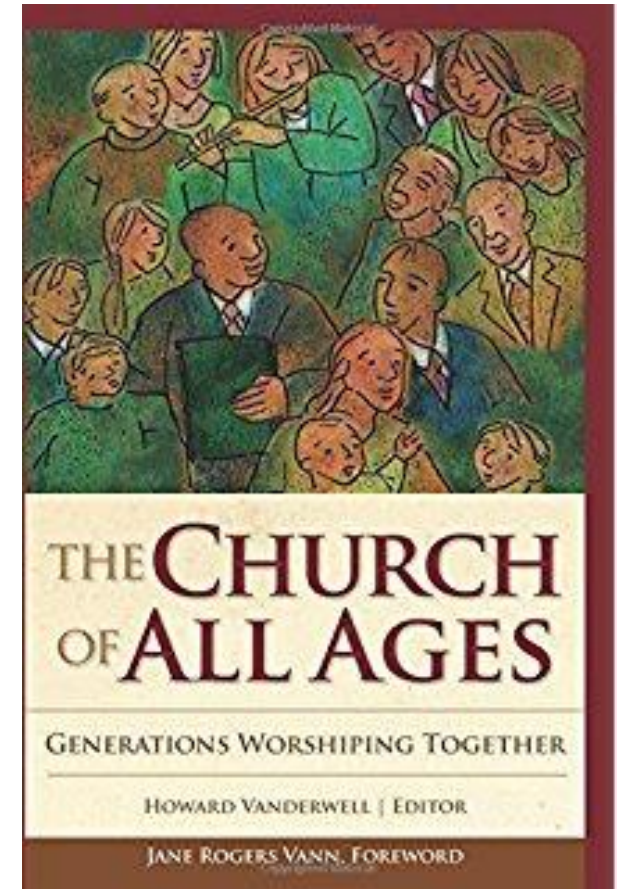
Stages of Faith

- ▶ Stage 1 – Intuitive-Projective Faith (0-5 years old)
 - ▶ Impressions and images are hugely important
- ▶ Stage 2 – Mythic-Literal Faith (6-12 years old)
 - ▶ Learn by stories
- ▶ Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith (M.S. and H.S.)
 - ▶ Who am I?
 - ▶ Abstract thinking



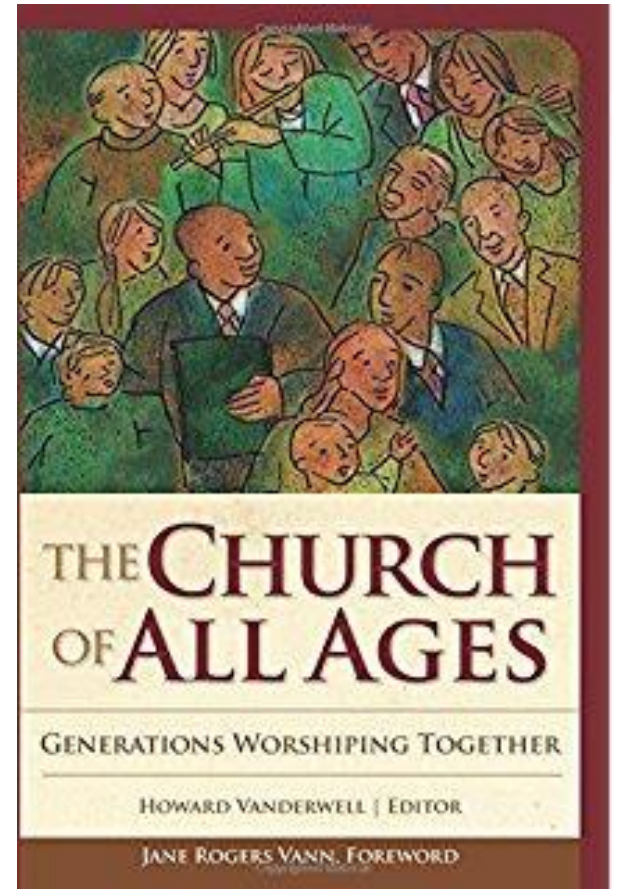
Stages of faith

- ▶ Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith (time of personal change)
 - ▶ Begin to take responsibility for your faith—like going off to college
 - ▶ Asking questions
- ▶ Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith (often in 30s)
 - ▶ It all comes together
- ▶ Stage 6: Universalizing Faith
 - ▶ Steadfast faith in action



Our Desire

“We want to add that while we long deeply for *child-friendly* worship, we’re not interested in having worship that is *child-centered*, as if the other generations weren’t important. And we certainly don’t want worship that is *childish*. Our kids needs practices to grow into. They spend much of their lives with people their own age. Worship is one of the few times they connect with people of all ages.”



General Thoughts

- ▶ In the liturgy we tell a story again and again and again
- ▶ Family rituals / Church rituals
- ▶ Do we give our children the best?
- ▶ What is a "good" children's song?
- ▶ How do children really learn? Use those senses!!
- ▶ Social learning and imitation of parents is best
- ▶ What do we do at home? Do we live Deuteronomy 6?



An Idea and a Project

Children's notes + Thought questions + Family discussion

MY WORSHIP NOTES

For children to use during worship.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

What is the name of the church season or special day today? _____

What is the color of the church today? Circle one: _____

Blue _____ White _____ Purple _____ Red _____ Green _____

The sermon text was: _____



This is in the: _____ Old Testament _____ New Testament

What was the sermon about? _____

My favorite song today was: _____

Did we have a sacrament today? _____

Draw a picture of something you heard or saw today: _____



Baptism?
 Yes
 No



Communion?
 Yes
 No

What did you learn about God today? _____

Points to Ponder



- ▶ The color for this day is white. How does the color white make you think of holiness?
- ▶ Our God is 3-in-1 (Triune). How many different symbols or reminders of the number 3 can you find in our church?
- ▶ What do you remember most about the sermon today?
- ▶ How does the blessing at the end of worship make us think about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- ▶ What was your favorite song we sang today? Why?
- ▶ Why does the pastor make the sign of the cross every time the Triune God is mentioned in church?

End Goal

- ▶ Practice and repetition
- ▶ Stimulation of thought
- ▶ Stimulation of senses
- ▶ Reinforcement at home
- ▶ Discipline and correction
- ▶ More practice and repetition

= ENGAGEMENT in Worship

Other Ideas

- ▶ Prep them on the service on the way to church
- ▶ Make sure parents know and feel they are welcome
- ▶ Sit up front
- ▶ CPH Children's Bulletins, Children's Bibles in the pews
- ▶ Activity Tree
- ▶ DISCIPLINE THEM
- ▶ "Catechesis of the Good Shepherd"

Other Ideas, continued

- ▶ Children pass out friendship registers
- ▶ Junior ushers, greeters, acolytes
- ▶ Family comments and debrief after service
- ▶ Students play pre/post service—do judiciously!
- ▶ Middle school and teens run AV equipment
- ▶ Middle school and teens in processions
- ▶ The more you repeat, the more they can join in!

The Look











Pastor Phil Huebner

- ▶ Campus Pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran High School
- ▶ 386-237-4368
- ▶ phil.huebner@wlhs.org