

Encouraging Kids for the "Sunday-Sermon-Feast"

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I love being a dad. Being a dad is at the same time gloriously rewarding wonderfully difficult. Thanks be to God for His Word and for His Truth and for His Church. As a dad, I want to shepherd my children by prioritizing the local church. So I want them to know just how important it is to worship God corporately, to gather with His people, to hear the Word preached, to glory in our Risen redeemer! Here are a few ways that I've thought about encouraging children for the "Sunday-Sermon-Feast." How do you help your kids prepare? What are some short, simple ways to help them prepare for it? Here are 4 simple, memorable headings:

1. GET READY! (prepare)

Encourage your children to get ready for worship *ahead of time*. Put the children to bed on Saturday night and cheerfully remind them that the best day of the week is coming when we gather with God's people to worship our sweet Savior! Then, when the Lord's Day morning arrives, remind them of the high privilege to enter into the King's presence to worship Him! So help your children prepare! Give them a view of God's bigness. Show them His glory. Gather the kids and pray for the preacher, intercede for the Spirit's power, ask for the lost to be converted, petition God for the believers to be fed and equipped. Help your kids *Get Ready!* Just as a parent would get ready and prepare for a sports tournament how much more must we prepare to meet the Lord and worship the King of the universe!

2. GET IN! (sit and focus; listen)

Remind the children that when we gather to worship God, it is an awesome privilege to be in God's holy and wonderful presence. It is wonderful but it's also fearful. Encourage the kids that God is high and exalted while at the same time He is near and intimate. Tell the kids that the preaching is for *them* -- not just for the older folks. Exhort the kids to sit still, to listen well, to listen for a key word(s), to try to get the main points in the sermon outline. Just as the kids sit still and focus during their favorite movie, so remind them that the worship of God far exceeds a movie and that we can -- and must -- get in the Word, internalize it, focus upon it, fight distractions, and listen to God speak to our souls through the preaching of His Word.

3. GO OVER! (review, pray thru it)

After a child receives a Christmas gift, what does he do the next morning? He plays with that toy again, and then the next day. And the next! How much more must we go back to God's Word and reflect on the greatness of His Truth -- again and again. You took your children to corporate worship, *Excellent!* Now, shepherd your children by going over the message with them (on the drive home). Then, if they are of age, encourage them to gather their sermon notes (or a few words they scribbled down) and *review* and *reflect* and *go over the message again*. Teach your children to pray through the sermon and re-preach it to their souls! Let not a sermon be lost by failing to go over the truth that was heralded. Let us hear and heed and receive and feed upon it all week long!

4. GAZE UP! (look to Christ)

In all your hearing and in all your applying and in all your doings, remember to gaze up to Jesus Christ! Remind yourself as you teach your children that Jesus is the sum of all things and He is the great Savior to all who come to Him in repentance and faith! In affliction, in hardship, in conviction of sin, in the discipline room, in the call for repentance and trust in Christ, in Christ's demand for holiness among His people, remind the kids to look upward to Jesus Christ! This is necessary not only initially in conversion but every single day of the Christian's life! Gaze upward to Jesus Christ!