

William Boekestein（威廉·博克斯特恩）是密歇根州卡拉馬祖市以馬內利團契教會的牧師，他是多本書的作者，包括《頑固的先知，忠實的神》（Stubborn Prophet Faithfull God）和兒童讀物《一週中最好的一天：我們爲什麼愛主日》（The Best Day of the Week: Why We Love the Lord’s Day）。

譯：JXY；校：JFX。

想像一下，一個沒有孩子的敬拜會是什麼樣子的？講道時不會有小傢伙的哭鬧或講話，你也不會在座椅或敬拜書籍上看到不需要的手工。椅子的褶皺裡再也挖不出小魚餅乾，沒有被丟得到處都是的訪客卡，也不需要回答訪客關於兒童事工的問題……沒有孩子的敬拜會很有秩序、很安靜的、很平和。

如果真是這樣，那這就表明教會生活中的某些東西出現了大問題。

在會眾敬拜中，孩子們永遠不應該缺席。從一開始，神的子民就知道，敬拜是聖約家庭共同參與的活動（以斯拉記10:1）。耶穌歡迎孩子們來到祂身邊，祂用他們來說明屬於神國意味著什麼（馬可福音10:13-16）。神期望孩子們能出現在敬拜中，聽到直接寫給神兒女的指示、應許和鼓勵（以弗所書6:1-3；歌羅西書3:20）。

但僅僅相信孩子們在敬拜中應該受歡迎，並不足以激勵我們像耶穌那樣全心全意地擁抱他們。家長們也需要鼓勵，這種鼓勵應當勝過帶著孩子們一起去教會的挑戰。我們必須幫助基督徒看到，讓孩子參加敬拜不僅合乎聖經，而且也是我們能爲他們做的最重要的事情之一。爲什麼這樣說呢？

一、敬拜給孩子們一個早期的屬靈歸屬感

信徒的孩子並不是外人。作爲基督徒家庭的成員，他們也「成了聖潔」（哥林多前書7:14）。作爲同屬有神形像的人和神聖應許的領受者（使徒行傳2:39），信主的孩子能夠在神的幫助下在聚會中敬拜祂（馬太福音21:15）。

敬拜場所並不像遊樂場的遊樂設施那樣有嚴格的身高要求，也不像大學那樣有嚴格的學術標準。不知何故，門徒們忽視了這一點，他們認爲孩子們只有在長大後和更聰明時才能來見耶穌。但耶穌並不同意：「不要禁止他們，因爲在神國的，正是這樣的人。」（馬可福音10:14）

帶上你的孩之加入到大群見證者中，一同敬拜真神。讓他們在教會中與神的子民在一起，這是將這一真理帶回家的最佳方式之一。在我們的教會中，即使很小的孩子也會跟著唱詩篇第1篇：「不從惡人的計謀，不站罪人的道路，不坐褻慢人的座位，惟喜愛耶和華的律法，晝夜思想，這人便爲有福。」孩子們無法精準定義所有詞彙，但是他們在學習——與年長的聖徒一起——成爲敬畏神的人，而不是褻慢神的人。他們正在被教授「像一棵樹，栽在溪水旁」那樣生活。僅僅通過被接納進入群體，他們就得著機會學習有意識地參與到基督的身體裡。

二、敬拜使孩子們養成基本的屬靈習慣

對於我們這些每週日在「教會大群」中長大的人來說，我們已經習慣了一個週日的模式：唱詩篇和讚美詩、聽道、和神的子民一起禱告。孩子們形成這樣的模式可能比我們意識到的要早。如果你懷疑這一點，可以試著改變你孩子的一些時間習慣，他們就會讓你知道！

提摩太從嬰幼兒時期就開始學習聖經（提摩太後書3:15）。研究人員向我們證實，兒童的身體會記住他們最初的經歷。他們早期參與的敬拜可以塑造他們成爲神的終身追隨者。清教徒威廉·高格（William Gouge）寫道：「通過從嬰幼兒時期開始對兒童進行良好的教育，可以省去以後的很多努力，因爲不斷地實踐某個美德會使其成爲一種固定的習慣。」

箴言22章6節是耳熟能詳的育兒經文，它也可以應用到敬拜上。受到敬拜訓練的孩子不會輕易忘記他們在生命早期就開始的主日之路。我曾坐在年邁信徒的床邊，他們除了童年的記憶外幾乎什麼都忘了。然而他們卻和我一起唱起了詩篇第23篇的詩歌，這些歌詞是他們在很久很久之前在聚會中學到的。

三、敬拜將向孩子們介紹榮耀的神

神應許在祂的子民聚集敬拜時以一種特殊方式與他們見面。有一首古老的讚美詩是真實的：在敬拜中，「神親自與我們同在。」這首讚美詩繼續描述了敬拜者的正確反應：我們尊崇祂，帶著敬畏出現在祂面前。我們保持肅靜，以最崇高的敬意跪下。我們與天使和聖徒一起歌唱：「聖哉，聖哉，聖哉！」我們爲什麼不希望我們的孩子們出席與耶穌——就是那位用祂的血洗淨我們罪的新約中保（希伯來書12:22-24）——這一榮耀的會面？畢竟，「（神）從嬰孩和吃奶的口中，建立了能力」（詩篇8:2）。

耶穌引用詩篇第8篇來證明孩子有時可以比成人更好地敬拜（馬太福音21:12-17）! 我們每個人都有責任榮耀和享受神，而團體敬拜是一種神聖的激勵，可以向神提供祂配得的讚美。除非一些特殊情況，這樣的敬拜對年長的敬拜者有好處，對年幼的也有好處。

讓孩子們參與教會敬拜並不容易。但這是正確的。就像任何困難但正確的事情一樣，這可以爲那些經練過的人結出豐碩的果子（希伯來書12:11）。

https://tc.tgcchinese.org/article/bring-children-worship

Imagine a worship service without children. No little ones crying or talking during the sermon. No chance of unwanted artwork on the seat fabric or worship books. No more fish crackers to dig out of the chair creases. No wasted visitor cards. No need to answer a dozen questions during the liturgy. A worship service without children would be orderly, quiet, and peaceful.

And it would be a sign that something in the life of the church is terribly wrong.

Children are never out of place in congregational worship. Since the beginning, God’s people have known that worship was an event for the whole covenant family (Ezra 10:1). Jesus welcomed children to himself, and he used them to illustrate what it means to belong to God’s kingdom (Mark 10:13–16). God expects children to be present in worship, hearing instructions, promises, and encouragements written directly to them (Eph. 6:1–3; Col. 3:20).

But a bare belief that children should be welcome in worship is not enough to invigorate us to wholeheartedly embrace them as Jesus did. Parents also need encouragement that outweighs the challenges involved in having children with them in church. We must help Christians see that including children in worship is not only proper biblically, but it’s also one of the most important things we can do for them. How can we say that?

1. Worship gives children an early sense of spiritual belonging.

Children of believers aren’t outsiders. As members of Christian households, they are set apart (1 Cor. 7:14). As fellow image-bearers and recipients of divine promises (Acts 2:39), believing children are able, with God’s help, to worship him in the congregation (Matt. 21:15).

Worship isn’t like an amusement park ride with strict height requirements or a university with rigorous academic benchmarks. Somehow the disciples missed this; they thought children should meet Jesus only when they were older and smarter. But Jesus wouldn’t have it: “Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14).

Bring your children to join the great cloud of witnesses in worshiping the true God. Having them in church with God’s people is one of the best ways to bring this truth home to them. Even very young children in our church sing along with Psalm 1: “That man is blest who, fearing God, from sin restrains his feet, who will not stand with wicked men, who shuns the scorners’ seat.” The children can’t define all those words. But they’re learning—along with older saints—to be God-fearers, not God-scorners. They’re being catechized to live “like a tree set by the river’s side.” Simply by being included, they’re learning to consciously participate in the body of Christ.

2. Worship embeds essential habits in children.

For those of us who grew up spending every Sunday in “big church,” some of our earliest rituals are singing psalms and hymns, listening to sermons, and praying with God’s people. Children develop patterns younger than we might realize. If you doubt that, try changing some of your children’s routines; they’ll let you know!

Timothy began learning the holy Scriptures from infancy (2 Tim. 3:15). Researchers assure us that children’s bodies remember experiences from their first days. Their early participation in worship can shape them to be lifelong followers of God. Puritan William Gouge writes, “By educating children well from their infancy much labor may afterward be spared, for constant practice of virtue makes it a settled habit.”

The well-known parenting verse, Proverbs 22:6, also has implications for worship. Children who have been trained to worship will not easily forget the liturgical paths they began walking early in life. I’ve sat at the bedside of old believers who have forgotten nearly everything but their childhood memories. And yet they have joined me in singing words from Psalm 23, words they learned a lifetime ago in the congregation.

3. Worship will introduce children to the God of glory.

God promises to meet with his people in a special way as they gather for worship. The old hymn is true: in worship, “God himself is with us.” The hymn goes on to describe the proper response of worshipers: we adore him and with awe appear before him. We keep silence, prostrate with deepest reverence. We join with the angels and saints singing, “Holy, holy, holy!” Why would we not want our children present for this glorious meeting with Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant who has washed away our sins with his blood (Heb. 12:22–24)? After all, “From the lips of children and infants [God has] ordained praise” (Ps. 8:2; NIV, 1984).

Jesus quoted Psalm 8 to prove that children can sometimes worship better than adults (Matt. 21:12–17)! And while we’re each personally responsible for glorifying and enjoying God, corporate worship is a divine stimulant for offering God his well-deserved praise. With few possible exceptions, what is good for older worshipers is also good for younger ones.

Including children in church isn’t easy. But it is right. And like any hard but right thing, it can yield bountiful fruit to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:11).

https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bring-children-worship/